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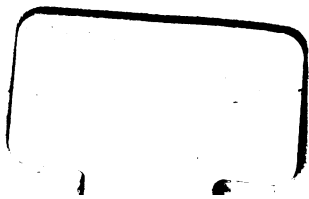
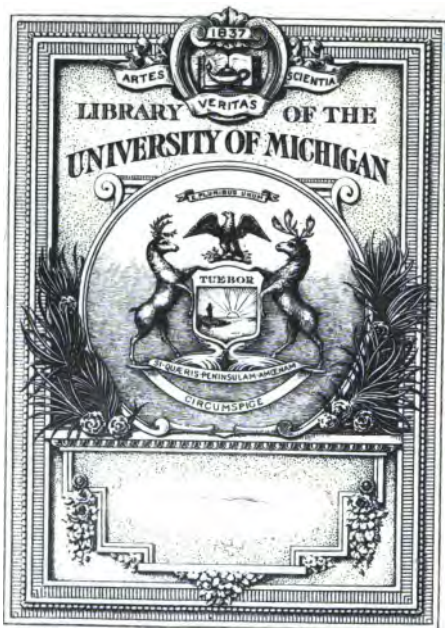
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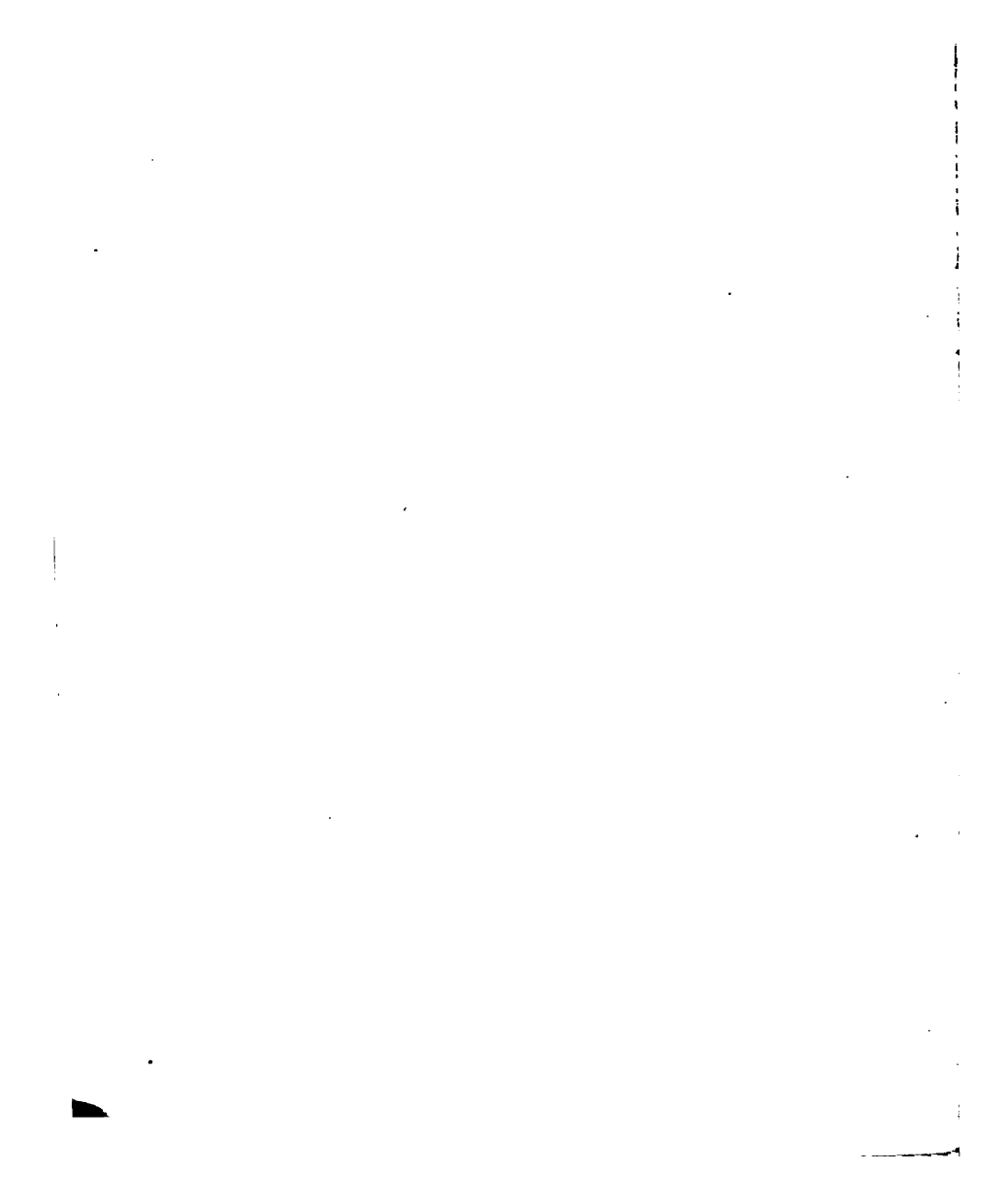
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SIX FAIRY PLAYS
FOR CHILDREN

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SIX FAIRY PLAYS
FOR CHILDREN · BY
NETTA SYRETT 



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TO
CHRISTIAN, EUGÉNIE, JANET,
AND MARJORIE
THE GIRLS FOR WHOM I WROTE
"THE DREAM-LADY"

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PREFACE

THIS little book is intended for the not inconsiderable number of people who are at a loss to find modern plays suited to the abilities of children and scarcely grown-up girls. In the hope that they may be useful in girls' schools, I have taken care to provide most of the plays with a sufficient number of court ladies, pages, fairies, or goblins, to allow of the introduction of as many minor characters as circumstances may render advisable. "The Dream-Lady," "White Magic," and "Little Bridget" should on this account be found particularly well suited for school representation.

At the same time it is not my purpose to appeal exclusively to schoolgirls. The hostess of a summer or winter house-party, for instance, with several quite young people among her guests, may find of service such a little play as "The Gift of the Fairies," "The Wonderful Rose," or "The Dream-Lady."

Perhaps, too, lovers of fairy-tale, for I have reason to believe that such still exist, may welcome some-

thing of a more or less fantastic nature, as a change from the rather monotonous *repertoire* of private theatricals.

For the convenience of those unused to stage-management, I have placed before each play a few hints and suggestions as to its treatment. They are of a simple nature, and their aim is merely to pass on to the beginner the little experience I myself have gained through arranging and directing a few plays for children. The skilful stage manager can easily disregard them.

NETTA SYRETT

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THE DREAM-LADY

A PLAY IN ONE ACT



SIX FAIRY PLAYS

THE DREAM-LADY

As regards general arrangement, the following suggestions for *The Dream-Lady* apply equally to any pastoral play. I have therefore treated each point rather fully in order to avoid repetition.

The Dream-Lady is best played in the open air, though it can quite well be put on the stage. If it is acted indoors, the garden scene, in which the whole action takes place, should be as romantic as circumstances and scene-painting can make it. The following hints, however, apply to an outdoor representation.

THE SETTING. For this particular play, a garden, an orchard, or even the edge of a small wood or plantation might serve. But select your stage with the following considerations in mind.

I. CONVENIENT ACCOMMODATION FOR AN AUDIENCE. If possible, the *auditorium* should be shady. Heat and sunshades are equally trying to the temper.

2. A GOOD BACKGROUND. A yew hedge or a line of thick bushes, is admirable in this respect. But if a site otherwise pretty and convenient has no natural background, a line of rough hurdles covered with bracken or branches of leafy shrub makes an excellent substitute. Hurdles treated in this fashion are very convenient for filling in an ugly space, and generally helping the "composition" of your stage picture.

3. PICTURESQUE SURROUNDINGS. It is well to take advantage of any romantic or picturesque features your garden may possess, if practical considerations do not outweigh the advantage of such a site. Inequalities in the ground, grassy banks, a flight of steps down which a procession could pass, anything, in fact, by way of natural "scenery" greatly helps the grouping of the figures and adds to the beauty of the picture. In this particular play the house itself, if it should happen to be at all romantic in appearance, might be the palace, and through it the actors could make some of their exits and entrances. If the house stands upon a terrace, with the garden below, a pretty effect is gained by the procession of attendants issuing from the house itself, some ladies and pages following the King and Queen to the

garden, where the action would take place, others in well-arranged groups, remaining always above upon the terrace.

4. CONVENIENT EXITS AND ENTRANCES FOR THE PERFORMERS. The "stage" must not be miles away from the dressing-room, for instance, nor so placed that the actors cannot easily hear and take up their *cues*.

5. THE LIGHTING. Notice how the light and shadow fall at the time of day at which the performance is to be given. The sun should not be in the actors' eyes, but sunlight falling *across* the stage is very effective.

CHARACTERS. The actors must *look* their parts. The Dream-Lady, for instance, should scarcely be played by a strapping, rosy-checked girl, however pretty and however good an actress. The King and Queen might well be represented by quite grown-up people, but if they are played by young girls, the Queen must be made up to look a matron, though a young and handsome one. The King may be much older, and perhaps a trifle absurd in appearance, though the burlesque spirit should be kept in check. The Prince can be played by a tall girl

of sixteen or seventeen. The children should be as young as possible. At any rate, they must not *look* more than six and seven.

The number of attendants will naturally vary with the space at your disposal. If you have a large stage, groups of pages and ladies in waiting compose well. But do not overcrowd the scene.

DRESS. In the age of fairy tale, the dresses may be a picturesque medley of period. Very effective for some of the attendants are straight fourteenth-century gowns with the tall pointed "sugar-loaf" head-dresses, from which depends a gauzy veil. But any number of easily made costumes may be suggested by the study of photographs from fourteenth and fifteenth century Florentine pictures, of books like *Cassell's Illustrated History of England* (numbers dealing with the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries) or of illustrated fairy tales, such as are to be found in the "Red" or "Blue" fairy books edited by Andrew Lang. The Dream-Lady should wear a "robe" as different as possible from the formal dress of the mortals in the play. One Dream-Lady of my acquaintance had a rather narrow and trailing gown of soft silk. In colour it was misty

blue. Cut a little low at the neck, it fell straight to the ground like a nightdress. A gauze veil of the same colour was fastened on her hair, and hung in clouds about her, half concealing her arms, which were bare. Whenever she appeared to the children, there were clusters of large white daisies in her hair, placed behind the ears, and from these bunches, chains of the same big moon daisies fell almost to her waist. A misty greyish blue is charmingly mysterious against a background of trees. If this colour is chosen for the Dream-Lady, the children should both be in white. Astorre should wear long stockings, a short tunic and cloak, Amellotte a long stiff gown (of brocade, if possible) with a little pearl-edged cap. White and gold, or white and silver, would be appropriate for the Princess. The King and Queen should be as sumptuous in appearance as circumstances may permit, while the Prince should choose some deep-coloured velvet for tunic and cloak.

STAGE MANAGEMENT. First think of the *picture* you want to produce, and then leave nothing to chance. All the attendants, for instance, must be drilled to make their entrances and exits in a certain

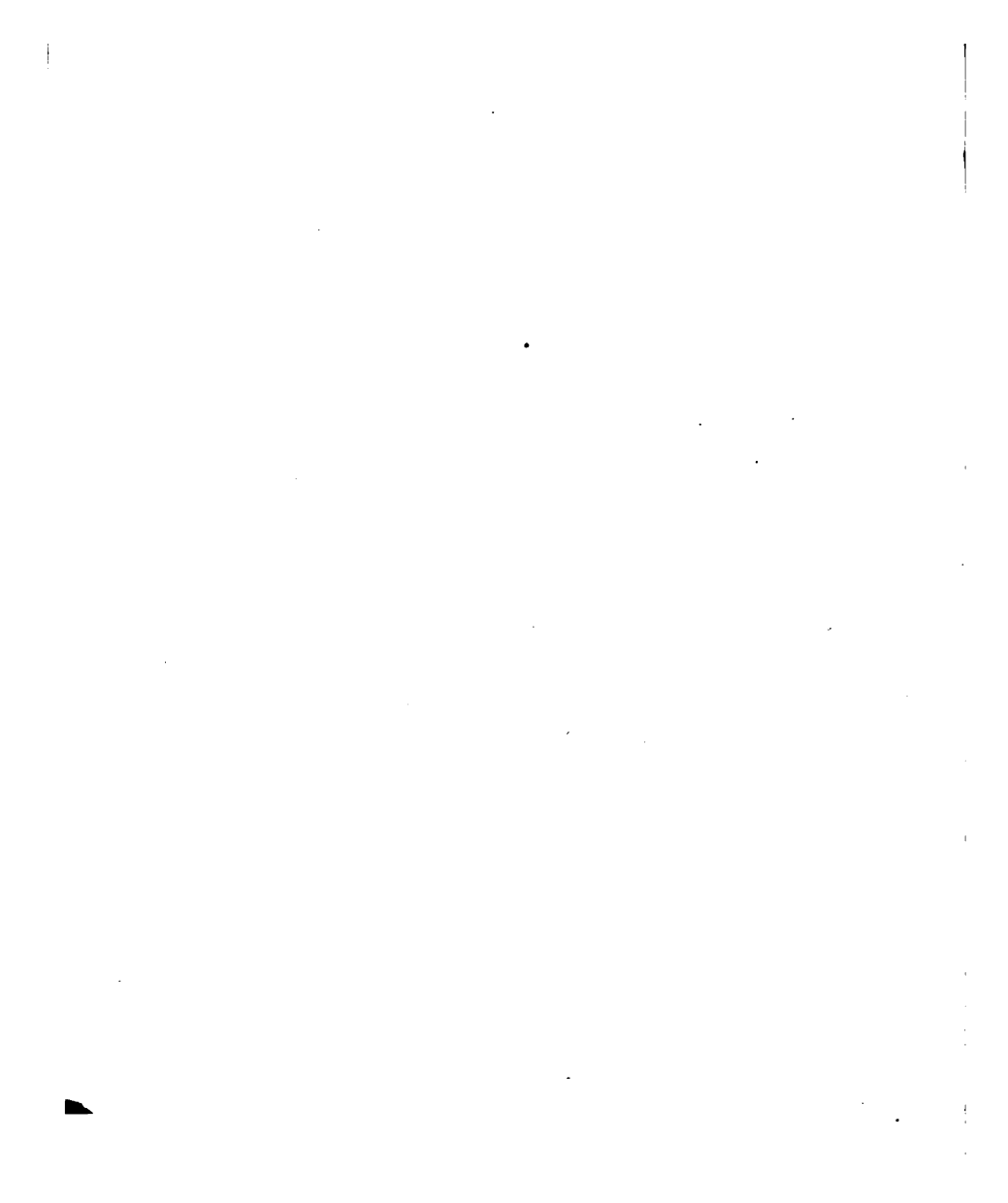
well-learned order. Each minor character must know exactly when to stand or sit, and what attitude to assume at every point in the play, so that the picture always "composes" well. Of course this applies equally to the principal figures. Think out each move, and then make the actors learn exactly when to cross the stage, where to stand while they say certain lines, and what positions to assume with regard to their fellow-actors. At any given point in the play, the stage-manager ought to know the relative positions of all the figures in his picture.

Invent suitable and natural byplay for the subordinate characters, but do not let this byplay become obtrusive. It should never distract attention from the principal characters.

MUSIC. Violins (with very unobtrusive piano accompaniment) are the instruments best suited to a pastoral play. If the musicians can be placed out of sight of the audience, yet with a full view of the "stage," so much the better. It is nearly always possible to arrange some sort of screen covered with greenery, behind which they may be placed, but unless the players can see exactly when their music is needed, and when it should cease, let them be

frankly visible *in front* of the stage. Martial music should be played at the entrance and at some of the exits of the King and Queen. If whenever the Dream-Lady enters or leaves the stage one particular air is played, which like Wagner's *leit-motif* the audience will come to recognise as the "dream-music," the mystery which should surround the Dream-Lady will be enhanced. This "dream-music" should be the last heard in the play, and should die gradually away in the distance after the Dream-Lady and the children have disappeared.

VOICE. Much training is necessary in order to make the voices "carry" out of doors. It is very difficult to speak in the open air, but with patience and practice this difficulty may be overcome without in any way straining the voice even of the youngest child.



THE DREAM-LADY

ACT I — SCENE I

SCENE. — *Part of the Garden of the King's Palace.*

Enter the KING, QUEEN, Ladies of the Court, Pages, etc. The Attendants form group and line the way. The KING with two Pages. The QUEEN with standard-bearers.

KING. [*Testily*] Dismiss these people, my dear, send them away, get rid of them! What 's the good of being a king, I should like to know, if one can't have a moment's peace from morning to night? Here am I followed about incessantly by a crowd of bowing, scraping —

QUEEN. [*Rising hastily*] Ladies! my lords! You are permitted to leave us. [*Exit, bowing*
[*Turning angrily to KING*] Really, my love, have you no sense of your position? Do you want every one to know you were n't born a king? You show

your feelings like any ordinary commoner, instead of remembering that a king *has* no feelings !

[*Beginning to cry*]

KING. [*Murmuring*] Ah! the exclusive possession of a queen, I see. Come, my dear, I implore you, do not cry. It exasperates me ; it always did, in the good old days before I was a king !

QUEEN. [*Hastily*] There you are again! Always harping on the same string. You take a pleasure in —

KING. [*Tearing his hair*] Oh, for heaven's sake, my love, be reasonable! Was ever a poor, inoffensive, mild-tempered man — I mean king — more worried? As though a ~~fantastic~~, capricious, unreasonable daughter was n't ~~trial~~ enough, his wife must ~~needs~~ whine and cry and refuse to listen when he wants to tell her of an offer of marriage he has received for the unworthy girl, — a really excellent offer ; an offer which —

QUEEN. [*Suddenly excited*] What? What did you say? Why did n't you tell me before? Who is he? Has he seen her? The dear child! How delighted I am! But, no wonder, with her beauty and her accomplishments.

KING. [*Drily*] And her ~~ridiculous~~ ~~nonsensical~~ notions !

QUEEN. [*Again on the verge of tears*] You never appreciated the child. You have n't the ordinary feelings of a father.

KING. A king, my love, if you remember, has no feelings!

QUEEN. That is so like you! Taking up my slightest word. But why don't you go on? Who is Fiametta's suitor?

KING. [*Complacently*] The Prince of Goldacres, my love.

QUEEN. [*Rapturously*] The Prince —

KING. Send for Fiametta.

QUEEN. [*Clapping her hands to summon Page*]
Go, tell the Princess we await her here. The Prince — my love, what an honour! What a delightful surprise! And we thought the Princess of Floramia had done well. Why, she has only twenty pages in waiting. Fiametta can have forty at least, and jewelled trappings to her horses — turquoise and gold would be charming, or pearls perhaps, and then —

KING. [*Grimly*] Not quite so fast, my dear. There are difficulties. Your daughter has been brought up very foolishly; her education was left to — ~~you~~, remember! Why, the girl scribbles *poetry*, I

believe! *Anything* may be expected from a girl who scribbles poetry.

QUEEN. Nonsense! Hush, here she comes!

Enter the PRINCESS, followed by Pages. She kisses hands of KING and QUEEN. Pages withdraw.

FIAMETTA [C.].

KING. [*Pompously*] Fiametta, we have summoned you to our august presence to impart to you a matter of deep moment.

QUEEN. [*Interrupting. KING leans back with shrug of despair*] Oh, my darling child! A suitor! Come and kiss your mother! Can you guess who comes to woo? The Prince of Goldacres, my daughter! Oh, Fiametta! what a happy, grateful girl you ought to be! He is so handsome, so rich, so powerful!

FIAMETTA. Yes, he is handsome, — I have seen his picture. Rich? [*Puzzled*]

QUEEN. Beyond all dreams! Child, your coach shall be of gold; you shall have milk-white horses and trappings, jewel set. Pearls for your hair —

FIAMETTA. Gold and jewels, yes — but has he seen the Dream-Lady?

KING. Has he seen what?

FIAMETTA. [*Turning to her mother reproachfully*]
The Dream-Lady. Have you forgotten, mother?
Long ago I said the Prince I marry must have seen
the Dream-Lady.

QUEEN. [*In desperation*] I thought that childish
nonsense was outgrown.

KING. [*Choking with rage*] What? What does
the girl mean? Speak! Heaven send me patience!
The Dream-Lady! Who is this Dream-Lady?

FIAMETTA. [*Shaking her head*] Ah! I don't
know. Sometimes she comes at dawn just when the
birds are waking. Sometimes I find her in the forest
standing waist-deep in fern, under the branching
trees. Sometimes for days I do not find her, and
then I am unhappy, for I cannot make my poems.
My poems never come without the Dream-Lady.

KING. The girl is mad! [*Controlling himself*]
Tell me, daughter, does any one but you see this—
Dream-Lady?

FIAMETTA. Oh, yes!

QUEEN. [*Who has become silent and reflective*]
Who, then, my daughter?

FIAMETTA. My little brother Astorre and my
sister, Amellotte!

KING. Baby children!

QUEEN. Who else?

FIAMETTA. There was the minstrel who came the other evening to the Palace Gates. Before the servants drove him from the door I talked to him. He, too, had seen the Dream-Lady.

KING. A tattered beggar!

FIAMETTA. He sang more beautifully than words can tell.

KING. [*Still controlling himself with difficulty*]

Go on. Who else?

FIAMETTA. The other day when I was riding through the city streets a girl sat spinning at an open door, and as I passed, she smiled. I stopped and talked to her. She said the morrow was her wedding day, and then she smiled again for happiness. She too had seen the Dream-Lady. Then all the children, even in the dirtiest streets —

KING. Did ever a poor, patient king and father listen to such stuff: the children in the streets — a beggarly musician — a woman at a cottage door — the girl is mad! Mad! [*Fiercely to her*] Do you suppose I ever saw this Dream-Lady?

FIAMETTA. Oh, no!

KING. Or the Lord High Chancellor, or the Gold Stick-in-waiting, or the Ladies of the Bed-chamber, or any of the people of the Court?

FIAMETTA. Oh, no!

KING. Well, then, let us have no more nonsense! The Prince arrives to-day. Receive him graciously, and in the name of common-sense no talk of Dream-Ladies and moonbeams! [*Getting up and going off in a fury*] Whatever the princesses of the present day are coming to, passes my poor wit! If I had my way, I'd lock them up in enchanted towers as they did in the good old times. [*Grumbling*] And even then the Prince always came and let them out. [*R. C.*]

FIAMETTA. [*Turning to her mother when the KING is out of hearing*] [*In distressed voice*] Mother, did you never see the Dream-Lady?

QUEEN. [*Moved*] I—I don't know, my child. It is so long ago.

FIAMETTA. [*Eagerly*] Oh, mother, when, when?

QUEEN. It is all dim and confused. But it was long ago. Your father was better-tempered then, and handsome, and I was young, as young as you.

FIAMETTA. Oh, then, mother, you will understand!

Only the nicest people see the Dream-Lady. That is why the Prince —

QUEEN. [*Shaking her head*] Ah, yes, my daughter, but we must be wise; the Dream-Lady brings neither gold nor land; and, after all —

[They go out, the QUEEN with her arm round the PRINCESS, who shakes her head as though unconvinced. Enter the little PRINCE and PRINCESS, ASTORRE and AMELLOTTE, followed by Attendants, who group themselves [L.], while the Children run across grass

ASTORRE. Let us sit here and finish the daisy chain.

AMELOTTE. We'll give this very long one to the Prince who came to-day. Shall we?

ASTORRE. Yes, and then — [*Music*

CHILDREN. The Dream-Lady, look! The Dream-Lady!

[The Children throw their daisies on the grass and run to meet her. She is crowned with daisies. She passes close to group of Attendants, who do not see her

ASTORRE. Nanina! Angelo! Stand up! Don't you see the Dream-Lady?

[*The Attendants look round, nod and laugh, and turn to their embroidery frames again. The Children look from them to the DREAM-LADY, puzzled*

PAGE. What does he mean?

NANINA. Oh, it's a game they play. They say a certain Dream-Lady is with them. They are strange children, their heads stuffed full of fairy nonsense. Give me a ~~skin~~ ^{chain} of silk, Denise. Not that, the rosy one.

DREAM-LADY. [*To CHILDREN*] Never mind, they do not see me.

ASTORRE. Not see you? Why, you are here!

DREAM-LADY. [*Smiling*] But not for them.

AMELOTTE. Did they ever see you?

DREAM-LADY. Perhaps, long ago.

ASTORRE. When they were little girls?

DREAM-LADY. [*Laughing*] Yes, when they were little girls. What are you doing? Making daisy chains. Well, I will help you.

ASTORRE. Tell us a story.

AMELOTTE. No, tell us where you've been to-day.

DREAM-LADY. Oh, to so many places. First, before dawn, I wandered through the meadows in the starlight, and saw the fairies dancing.

AMELOTTE. Did the Queen dance too? Show us how she danced.

DREAM-LADY. No, you dance, Astorre. Do you remember when we watched the elves dancing in the moonlight? Show us how they danced. [*The child dances*]

[*After the dance*

Beautiful, Astorre!

[*To AMELOTTE*

We can almost see the fairy rings growing, can't we, ~~sweetheart?~~

ASTORRE. And then where did you go?

DREAM-LADY. Then I went through the forest —

AMELOTTE. Oh, did you see my dolly? The other day I lost her in the forest.

DREAM-LADY. Yes, I saw her. [*Mysteriously*]
She is changed into a fairy.

CHILDREN. A fairy!

DREAM-LADY. I saw her driving into Fairyland. She had a little coach made of a hazel-nut, and two brown dormice drew her coach.

AMELOTTE. What was she dressed in?

DREAM-LADY. A daisy had lent her its fringed petticoat all tipped with rosy pink.

ASTORRE. And on her head?

DREAM-LADY. She wore its crown of gold.

AMELOTTE. And on her feet?

DREAM-LADY. Little silky shoes, made of its green leaves.

CHILDREN. [*Clapping their hands*] And she has gone to Fairyland? Will she come back again?

DREAM-LADY. Yes, because she heard you crying for her. But she won't look like your dolly. She will be turned into a daisy.

AMELOTTE. [*Dolefully*] How shall we know her, then?

DREAM-LADY. Come here, and I will tell you.

[*The Children lean against her, and she says poem while they gradually grow sleepy*

[*Music*

Down by the river, where green grows the grass,
Under the shining stars fairy folk pass;
Fairies from Dreamland come trooping that way,
But there by the river your dolly will stay.

Under the shining stars all the night long
The fairies come flocking with laughter and song,
Hastening to Fairyland ere break of day,
But there in the green grass your dolly will stay.

She is the whitest of all the white daisies ;
Brightest of all is the gold crown she raises ;
Rosiest pink is the frill of her gown ;
When you have found her, children, kneel down.

Kneel down beside her, and tell her you know
That she is a fairy, and say she may go
Back to her Fairyland, happy and gay,
Kiss her and thank her, but don't make her stay.

[The Children sleep

Don't make her stay in this dull world of ours ;
Let her go back to the undying flowers
Of that magic land of whose starlight and streams
Mortals catch but a glimpse through the Lady of Dreams.

*[The DREAM-LADY goes out, finger on lip,
passing the group of Attendants, before
whom she pauses a moment*

DENISE. You do not think she will refuse the
Prince's hand ?

NANINA. *[Shrugging her shoulders]* Who knows ?
Her folly has no bounds.

DENISE. And such a Prince !

NANINA. Handsome !

DENISE. Young !

NANINA. Above all, rich !

DENISE. Ah, yes ! so rich. Life holds no gift so great as gold.

NANINA. [*Smiling*] What does our song say?

[*Sings*

Life is a toy with which we play
A little while, a summer's day.
Since life's a toy, howe'er it be,
None but a gilded toy for me !

Life is a toy whose colours die ;
Fame but a bubble blown on high.
Since life's a toy, howe'er it be,
None but a gilded toy for me.

Why, look ! they are asleep ! Come, Prince. Come, Princess. [*She rouses them*

ASTORRE. Let us go and look for the whitest of all the white daisies.

AMELOTTE. [*Rubbing her eyes*] Has the Dream-Lady gone?

NANINA. [*As they go out*] Nonsense ! There is no Dream-Lady. [*L.*

[*Music*

Enter PRINCE, KING, and QUEEN. [*R. C.*]

KING. Well, Prince, you have seen our daughter. How does your wooing prosper?

PRINCE. [*Shrugging his shoulders*] Sire, indifferently! The Princess, indeed, is all my fancy painted, beautiful, accomplished, gracious. She would prove a queen of whom I should be proud. Well, Sire, I urged my suit, — a suit not all unworthy, as I think. But when I laid my crown, my fortune, at her feet, she made but one reply. She talked about a certain Dream-Lady.

QUEEN. Whom you have never seen?

PRINCE. [*Laughing*] Madam, I care to see no Dream-Ladies.

KING. The Prince prefers them flesh and blood, like a wise man.

PRINCE. [*Still laughing*] Sire, you are right! Beauty, bright eyes, the red wine in the cup, the rousing horn through all the forest glades, these make the joy of life. Dreams and Dream-Ladies I'm content to leave to the world's dreamers.

KING. Well spoken, Prince. Wife, here is a son for us! Fiametta must be brought to reason. [*Impatiently*] You see, my love, she must be brought to reason?

QUEEN. [*With a start*] Oh, yes! you are right. In time we are all brought to reason.

KING. This nonsense must be stopped, — put an

end to, settled once for all! This Dream-Lady is becoming an intolerable nuisance. To prove the calmness of my temper, Prince, to prove the fair and reasonable view I always take of things, I caused inquiry to be made, and summoned all who babbled of this thing.

PRINCE. [*Smiling*] And the result?

KING. [*Contemptuously*] Oh, I have just dismissed a crowd of beggars, children, silly young maids, mooning poets, and the like!

PRINCE. All telling the same tale?

KING. No, not even that. They could not keep even the same foolish story. [*To QUEEN*] What was the madness that they talked, my love? I had not the patience to hear half they said.

QUEEN. [*Slowly*] To the old crippled woman she came with poppies in her hand. The young bride saw her crowned with roses. As for the children—

KING. Ah, that reminds me! Our children, as I think, have heard the common talk. I have sent for them. This must be stopped, I say. I am a plain man,—I should say king,—there's no nonsense about *me*, and there shall be none about my Court!

QUEEN. Here come the children.

[C. R.] *Enter the two Children with Attendants and FIAMETTA. The Children kiss hands of KING and QUEEN. PRINCE bows before FIAMETTA and they stroll away together.*

KING. Now, my children, I'm told you think a certain lady comes and talks to you —

AMELOTTE. She *does* come. She is the Dream-Lady. She told us where to find our dolly, and we've found her, only she's a daisy now.

ASTORRE. No, by this time she's a fairy. We told her to go back to Fairyland.

FIAMETTA. What did the Dream-Lady say?

AMELOTTE. [*Looking at ASTORRE*] You begin.

[*They say the DREAM-LADY's poem between them, but hesitate before the last verse*

AMELOTTE. There was some more, but I have forgotten —

ASTORRE. Yes, so have I.

KING. [*Looking round to Attendants*] Who taught them this?

CHILDREN. The Dream-Lady said it!

KING. Fiddlesticks! What is the Dream-Lady like?

AMELOTTE. She is very pretty.

ASTORRE. She has daisies in her hair.

FIAMETTA. Daisies! No, not daisies. She is crowned with a laurel wreath.

KING. [*Turning to PRINCE*] There! not the same tale, you see! [*To Children*] Now listen, Astorre and Amellotte! I forbid this ~~imbecility~~. There is no Dream-Lady. I don't see her, and therefore what I don't see, don't you presume to see. Play with your dolls, your rocking-horses and ~~falls~~, like reasonable beings, and never let me have to speak of this again. [*The Children go off in tears*]

AMELOTTE. [*Sobbing*] There is a Dream-Lady!

ASTORRE. Of course there is a Dream-Lady.

KING. [*In violent temper*] What? Do they presume to argue with me? Do the very babies set me at naught! Here am I, a thoroughly reasonable, patient, temperate man, defied! defied in my own Court by a pack of women and children! Abominable! [*To Attendants*] Monstrous! **Keep off, I say!** I will *not* be followed about from morning to night — I — [*Rushes off L.*]

QUEEN. [*Aside to FIAMETTA*] So like your father! before the Prince, too! The last person one would wish to guess he was n't born a king. [*Glancing at the PRINCE as he walks away*]

Be wise, my daughter. Believe me, dreams are useless.

[Exit with Attendants]

PRINCE. What can I say to win you, fair Princess? Will you not leave this dreaming and come out into the world with me? I will win kingdoms for your smile, and you shall be the fairest queen and rule the broadest lands of any lady on this earth. Say! is it nothing to wed with one brave in the fight, skilled in the chase, honoured and feared throughout his realm?

FIAMETTA. Ah, but you do not understand! All this is much to me. The Prince I marry must be brave in war, skilled in the chase, honoured and feared indeed, but to such a Prince may not the Dream-Lady come?

PRINCE. [Smiling] What can I do, Princess, if she comes not to me?

FIAMETTA. [Sadly] Nothing, I fear, but leave me. Yes, leave me now a little while alone. The King, I think, goes hunting. Will you not join him?

PRINCE. [Turning back to look at the PRINCESS] She is the sweetest lady in the world! Would I could find a way to win her! [Hesitating] Since she persists in this mad fantasy, I'd even see the

Lady of her dreams [*half laughing*] if it were possible!

[FIAMETTA *takes her tablets and tries to write.*
Shakes her head mournfully

FIAMETTA. No use! My poems never come without the Dream-Lady.

DREAM-LADY *enters, crowned with laurel, comes softly behind the PRINCESS, and takes pencil from her hand.*

FIAMETTA. [*Starting*] The Dream-Lady! Is it indeed the Dream-Lady! Lady, I feared another day would pass without a sight of you. It is so long — such a long time — since you have come to me.

DREAM-LADY. Have I been well remembered? Not since the day you saw the Prince's picture.

FIAMETTA. No, I confess it! Since I saw him, my books, my poems, all my dreams of fame, seem to mean nothing to me any more.

DREAM-LADY. And you would be his wife?

FIAMETTA. [*Hesitating*] I am afraid! He does not see the Dream-Lady, and — I am afraid. [*Kneeling beside her*] Lady! will you not go to him?

DREAM-LADY. He would not see me. He must first believe that I exist.

FIAMETTA. [*Anxiously*] Shall I persuade him?

DREAM-LADY. Who knows? Perhaps. [*She takes the laurel wreath from her hair and begins to move slowly away*]

FIAMETTA. Why do you take the laurel from your hair?

DREAM-LADY. You will not need it now.

FIAMETTA. Shall I not see you any more?

DREAM-LADY. If the Prince sees me, never any more.

FIAMETTA. Lady! I cannot lose you!

DREAM-LADY. Not if you gain your heart's desire? Can you have that unpaid for? Is the price too costly?

FIAMETTA. [*Suddenly*] No! . . . But if I do not gain my heart's desire?

DREAM-LADY. Yours is the woman's risk. Farewell; I take with me the laurel crown, and leave the rose with you [*Giving her the rose*]

[*The PRINCESS looks regretfully after the DREAM-LADY, then kisses the rose*]

Enter the PRINCE. The PRINCESS starts.

FIAMETTA. Prince! You have returned!

PRINCE. We did not go, Princess. The King is — indisposed.

FIAMETTA. Ah ! he is still angry, then ! I am sorry, Sir, that you have lost your sport.

PRINCE. And, I, Princess, have blessed the King's annoyance, since it has brought me to you once again before I say farewell.

FIAMETTA. [*Falteringly*] Farewell !

PRINCE. Yes, for I cannot win you.

FIAMETTA. Ah, but if the Dream-Lady —

PRINCE. Princess, I fear I shall not see the Dream-Lady. If she exists, it is to other, different folk she comes, — to the two children in their innocence ; to you, who are yourself a poem ; to those who love as some men love.

PRINCESS. But do you not love me ?

PRINCE. I am ashamed to think how I came here to woo you. My Queen, I thought, must do me honour. She must have rank and beauty, that my subjects may applaud my choice, and that I may be envied in my world. For love, and for your happiness, Princess, I took no thought.

FIAMETTA. [*Softly*] And now ?

PRINCE. And now, since I have seen you, watched you, talked with you, I find that I have never loved

before. For your dear sake I could believe — even in the Dream-Lady! Ah, Princess! I did not know that love was such a mighty lord.

[As he takes her hand to say farewell, the DREAM-LADY appears. She is crowned with roses. He turns, sees her, and starts back in amazement]

PRINCE. The Dream-Lady! *[Kneels and kisses her hand]*

[The DREAM-LADY, smiling, disappears]

PRINCE. *[In dazed fashion, turning to PRINCESS, to whom the DREAM-LADY is invisible]* The Dream-Lady! She has appeared to me! Then, Princess! *[kisses her]* Was she not beautiful?

FIAMETTA. How did she come to you?

PRINCE. *[Astonished]* You saw her? Crowned with roses? Red roses in her hands?

FIAMETTA. *[Shaking her head]* I only saw your face, my Prince. The Dream-Lady will come to me no more. But I am content; I have your love instead.

KING *[R.]*. *[Rushing in angrily, followed by QUEEN]* Oh! by all means, send him away. Let him return — let us lose all our chances! We must not thwart our daughters nowadays!

PRINCE. [*Leading PRINCESS to KING and QUEEN*] Sire, the Princess has given me my happiness.

QUEEN. [*Tentatively*] My dear child!

[*Embraces her*]

KING. [*With sudden change of tone*] I am rejoiced to hear our daughter has at length remembered ~~her~~ ^{his} duty. Come here, my child, and kiss ~~our~~ ^{his} hand. Prince, I commend her to you, and [*aside*] don't have any of her nonsense. [*Strutting up and down*] I thought our kingly dignity must awe her to submission! Where are all the attendants? Never anybody here when they are wanted, of course! [*He rushes out to seek Attendants*]

QUEEN. [*To FIAMETTA*] My daughter, you have chosen wisdom's path, believe me.

FIAMETTA. Ah, mother! but the Prince has seen the Dream-Lady.

QUEEN. [*Incredulously*] The Prince! my child is very much in love!

Enter KING [R. C.] followed by the Attendants with Children.

KING. Ladies! my lords! Let me announce to you the betrothal of the Princess, our daughter, with our fair friend, the Prince of Goldacres. We will lead

on towards the council-room, where, with ~~solemnity~~ ^{solemnity},
I may announce this fortunate event. [*To QUEEN
aside*] I think, my love, something in the way of
a banquet this evening might not be out of place.

[*Bridal Music*

[*Exit PRINCE, PRINCESS, KING, and QUEEN,
with Attendants, who scatter flowers.
The two Children have stolen away from
the rest and hidden*

[*Music*

*The DREAM-LADY appears after the bridal train has
passed. The CHILDREN run to her.*

ASTORRE. Here she is!

AMELOTTE. Our Dream-Lady!

DREAM-LADY. [*Looking towards the disappearing
bridal party*] Ah! they may forget — but I shall
always have the children!

[*With her arms round them she wanders
out of sight*

[*Music*

Finis

LITTLE BRIDGET

Vertical line of text on the right edge of the page.



LITTLE BRIDGET

“They stole little Bridget” . . .

The Fairies. — W. ALLINGHAM.

THE SETTING is sufficiently described in the stage directions, but it can of course be more simply treated, as long as the doors for exits and entrances are in the positions indicated.

CHARACTERS. It is essential that Bridget should be played by a clever child with a sense of humour. If she cannot sing, let her say her verses. The pixy-song might be recited to an accompaniment of soft music.

DRESS. The dress described in the stage directions for *The Wonderful Rose* would do for the older characters, but any eighteenth-century pictures of country people will show the costume. BRIDGET should wear a high-waisted frock of dark green, with short puff sleeves. It must be torn and untidy. In the second act she must either have a nightgown

or a dressing-gown quaintly cut, or retain the same dress.

The pixies must be all in green, though some of them may wear red caps, basin-shaped or pointed. Their tight-fitting tunics would look pretty, slashed up to suggest long leaves.

MUSIC. Let this be as weird and *reedy* as possible. It should generally sound a little faint and far away.

LIGHTING. Unless the moonlight effect can be well managed, do not attempt it. Let Bridget light the candles. Of course moonshine, if it can be arranged, with a glimmer of candle-light as well, greatly helps the picture.

LITTLE BRIDGET

CHARACTERS

MISTRESS WILLOW. BRIDGET (a fairy changeling).
CHLOE (her daughter). BETTY (the servant-maid).
LUBIN (betrothed to Chloe). PIXIES.

SCENE I

A kitchen in an eighteenth-century farmhouse. There is a wide fireplace with chimney-seat, an oak dresser, and other old-fashioned furniture. Low casement windows, with chintz curtains. A spinning-wheel near the fire, and an untidy heap of flax scattered about near it.

Enter MISTRESS WILLOW. She starts back in dismay at sight of the confusion.

MISTRESS W. Why, who—? [*Going to door and calling*] Betty! Betty!

BETTY. Yes, mistress?

MISTRESS W. Who hath been meddling with my spinning, Betty? Prithee, look! All the work of this last week unravelled and destroyed.

BETTY. [*Holding up her hands in dismay*] Alack the day! Look at it indeed! A pretty business to set right, and no mistake.

MISTRESS W. [*Impatiently*] But who hath done it, Betty? 'T is scarce an hour since I left the wheel.

BETTY. I protest I know not, mistress. There's no one in the house but you and me. Mistress Chloe's milking, and as for little Mistress Bridget —

MISTRESS W. [*Severely*] She's under lock and key, and so she shall remain till she repents her ill behaviour. What doth possess the child I vow I cannot tell. As to this mischief [*pointing to the flax*] I know not — [*Breaking off in tone of annoyance*] Betty, again this fire is out!

BETTY. [*In exasperated tone*] Out again! Thrice this morning have I lighted it! A fire that till a week ago burnt at a touch.

MISTRESS W. Don't chatter, girl. Bring some more sticks if you have done the churning.

BETTY. Churning, mistress? These three hours and more I've turned and turned till my poor arms

are black and blue. Moll's at it now, but not a sign of butter. And as for —

MISTRESS W. [*Suddenly interrupting*] The clock hath stopped. The clock that's gone for twenty years and more!

BETTY. [*Aghast*] Good lack, mistress! What's coming to the house? [*Glancing out of the window*] Here's Master Lubin walking from the farmyard with a basket. Fie! how glum he looks!

Enter LUBIN, a youth in a smock frock. He carries a covered basket.

LUBIN. [*Gloomily*] Good-morrow, Mistress Willow. Two more of the best hens are like to die. [*Glancing at hearth*] I thought maybe you'd have a fire to warm them.

MISTRESS W. Betty! Bring the sticks. [*Exit BETTY to return a moment later with sticks. She kneels before the hearth, arranging them*]

LUBIN. [*Gloomily*] The cow is dead.

MISTRESS W. Not poor old Whitefoot? Oh, this is grievous, Lubin.

LUBIN. All the black pigs are ill. A fox hath taken the white duck and her ducklings, and the old mare's gone lame.

MISTRESS W. [*Wringing her hands*] Lubin !
Lubin ! What's coming to the house ? It seems
bewitched. . . . Where is Chloe ?

LUBIN. [*Stiffly*] I vow I know not. An hour
ago, I left her going a-milking. What ails the maid
I cannot say. She left me in a monstrous evil
temper.

MISTRESS W. [*Amazed*] Chloe in an evil tem-
per ! You and Chloe, who do naught but bill and
coo ? Why, in another week you will be man and
wife !

Enter CHLOE with her milk-pail, sobbing.

CHLOE. We never, never shall be man and wife !
I will not bear it ! No, I will not bear it !

BETTY. [*Springing up*] Drat the fire ! It will
not burn.

*[High, shrill laughter heard, and a voice
to which all listen, begins to sing mockingly]*

Oh, the fire won't burn,
And the milk won't churn.
The old cow 's dead,
Sister Chloe 's unwed,
Sing hey ! Sing hey ! and be merry !

MISTRESS W. [*Sitting down on chair and covering her face with her hands*] That's Bridget! Alas! Alas! What can possess the child? A week ago, the sweetest little maid that ever stepped. And now —

[*Voice again*

Sing hey, sing hey, and be merry!

MISTRESS W. [*Angrily*] Go, Betty! Unlock her chamber door. Tell her of my displeasure, and command her to be silent.

[*Exit BETTY*

[*MISTRESS WILLOW talks while CHLOE sobs, and LUBIN leans sulkily against the dresser*

A week ago, a stern look was enough if she had done amiss, and now nothing will touch her. She doth but laugh and scoff—

“BRIDGET” *rushes into the room, laughing wildly, helplessly followed by BETTY. She is a child of ten or eleven. Her hair flies loose, and is wild and untidy. Her dress is torn. Her face is full of mischief. She runs to her mother, roughly embraces her, still laughing, and begins to dance round her.*

BRIDGET. Oh, what fun ! What fun ! Poor Betty tried to catch me. She unlocked the door like this — [*mocking her*] and out I whisked. I vow I never laughed so much. [*She turns to her sister*] Why, what's amiss with Sister Chloe? [*Sobbing in mockery and then laughing and dancing*] And Lubin too ! Look at his dismal face. [*She imitates it*] What's in the basket, Lubin? [*Kneeling down, she looks in, and jumps up, clapping her hands*] Oh, the silly, fluffy hens. They are both dead ! They hang their heads like this. [*She lets her head fall limply about, while she laughs*]

[*Everyone has watched the child in amazement, without speaking*]

MISTRESS W. [*Breaking silence*] How dare you, mistress ! Go back to your room.

BRIDGET. You must catch me first. Come, Betty, catch me ! Catch me ! [*She runs before BETTY, who tries in vain to catch her. At last she springs on to a high chair, and holds out her arms to LUBIN, insinuatingly*] I will go back if Lubin takes me.

LUBIN. [*Goes forward rather eagerly*] There's a good little maid.

BRIDGET. [*Still standing on the chair*] Put down your head ; I want to whisper to you. [*He obeys*]

[*While she whispers, he stares before him in a rapt way, and finally leads her from the room, while she still talks to him in an undertone*]

BETTY. Sakes alive ! Did e'er a body see the like of that ? [*Goes out, slamming door*]

CHLOE. [*Watching them out of the room*] Mother ! What is it ? What doth possess the child ? Does she always laugh and clap her hands with wicked glee when she sees Lubin ?

MISTRESS W. [*Shaking her head*] I am distraught. It is most strange, — most strange. Is she the little Bridget we have known these ten years ? Here comes Lubin. Make up your quarrel, child. I will help Betty with the churning while you set the supper.

[*Exit*]

LUBIN *comes back, and sits down in chimney corner, lost in thought.* CHLOE *begins to lay the supper, glancing every now and then at him.*

CHLOE. [*Impatiently at last*] Prithee, Lubin, speak !

LUBIN. [*Looking up in a dazed way*] Speak ? What should I say ?

CHLOE. [*With spirit*] 'T were well perhaps to ask my pardon.

LUBIN. Your pardon? What have I done?

CHLOE. [*In exasperated voice*] Done! Did you not talk to me an hour or more this morning about another maid?

LUBIN. [*Passing his hand across his eyes*] What did I say?

CHLOE. You said she was as straight and tall and slender as a reed. You said her eyes were like the sea. You said she danced to charm the hearts of men. You said she stretched out her white hands to you, and— [*In trembling voice*] if you dared, you 'd take her for your bride.

LUBIN. [*In dreamy voice*] I said this to *you*, Chloe?

CHLOE. You know well you did! Dare you deny it?

LUBIN. You are dreaming.

CHLOE. [*Looking at him*] 'T is you who dream. Oh, what hath come to this poor house? What ails my sister Bridget? What ails you? . . . What doth she whisper to you, Lubin?

LUBIN. [*Starting*] Whisper? Doth she whisper? Yes, but what is it she says? I vow I know not, Chloe!

CHLOE. [*Angrily, as she puts lighted candles upon the table*] How dare you mock me? I will not bear it, sir! I will not bear it!

MISTRESS W. [*At door*] Is supper set, Chloe?

CHLOE. [*Half crying*] Yes, it is ready.

BETTY comes in with dishes which she places on table.

MISTRESS WILLOW and CHLOE sit down.

MISTRESS W. Come, Lubin!

[*He rises, and comes slowly towards the table. Voice of BRIDGET heard singing:*

Sister Chloe's unwed,
Sing hey! Sing hey! and be merry.

[*LUBIN starts and stands listening, then slowly seats himself at the table*

MISTRESS W. [*Despairingly*] Alack! What can this mean? Is the child bewitched?

[*As they begin supper, the door at the back opens, and BRIDGET peeps in for one second, unobserved*

Curtain

SCENE II. (*Same Room*)

Moonlight streaming in through casement windows.

Door opens, and BRIDGET comes softly in. She lights candles on the table, and then laughing to herself she begins to dance, and presently flinging the windows open, sings :

Come, little pixy-men, little men in green,
Come, for the moon is bright.
Sweep across the dreary moor, in the starlight keen,
Float through the silent night.

Rise from the rushes, in the river deep,
Crowd from the shadowy lake,
Mortals lie in downy beds, closely wrapped in sleep,
Only the fairies wake.

Pixy-men have left their dance in the mazy ring,
Nearer they come, I ween,
Hark ! I hear the rushing air ; hark ! I hear them sing,
Little pixy-men in green.

[She runs to the door, opens it, and lets in a crowd of pixies

BRIDGET. Welcome, little men in green ! *[She seizes some of them by the hands, and whirls them round in a dance. Others run about the room, laugh-*

ing and chattering together. Some stop the clock. Some pull flax from the spinning-wheel, and otherwise put the room in disarray. BRIDGET at last drags a high stool into the middle of the room, perches herself upon it, and calls :]

Come, little men ! Come, Green Jacket ! Come, Red Cap ! Come, White Owl's Feather.

[The pixies crowd round her, some seated on the floor. BRIDGET speaks mockingly

How is the real Bridget ? Dear good little maid !

GREEN JACKET. Still she weeps and weeps and weeps, like autumn rain.

BRIDGET. *[With glee]* Tell me how you caught her ! I'm never weary of the story.

[Pixies, speaking very fast one after another

WHITE OWL'S FEATHER. 'T was her mother's fault !

RED CAP. She tied her sleeves —

GREEN JACKET. Yes, with green ribbon —

WHITE OWL'S FEATHER. At the christening ! At the christening !

BRIDGET. Peace ! Peace ! you chattering little men. Green Jacket, tell me ! All the rest keep silence.

GREEN JACKET. And so her thoughts were always full of fairy folk. And in the gloaming, just a week

ago, she stole on tiptoe to the haunted glen and peeped between the rocks.

She saw us dancing in our fairy ring ;
 She listened to our whispers, heard us sing,
 And so we caught and held an earthly child,
 While mortals are by elfin sprites beguiled.

BRIDGET. [*Laughing*] Thanks to the Pixy-king, who sent me in her stead, to plague them.

THE PIXIES. What have you done? What have you done?

BRIDGET. Good little folk, I've thought of everything! The pigs are dead. The old mare's lame. No fire burns; no milk churns. The clocks all stop, the spinning is unravelled — and, oh! what a wicked little maid is Bridget! [*Mocking* MISTRESS WILLOW, BETTY, and CHLOE]

“What ails the little maid that mother loved?”

“Lud! What has come to Mistress Bridget?”

“Can this be little sister Bridget?”

Ah! and that brings me to the best sport of all. Chloe has quarrelled with her Lubin — the foolish youth to whom I whisper [*she sinks her voice*] whisper — fairy things. Soon he will forget all else but fairy things.

GREEN JACKET. And so we hold a mortal child at last!

RED CAP. Ah! and she dances now in fairy ring.

WHITE OWL'S FEATHER. At morn and eve she hears the pixies sing.

GREEN JACKET. And she shall hear them till seven years are past.

BRIDGET. Seven years is long to mortals. For me it is an hour, — a merry hour, in which I plague and tease them. [*She springs from the high stool, and the pixies move it aside*]

Come, little men! Take hands in a long line, and we will dance and make merry in the mortals' home.

While all the pixies have their backs to the door, it opens, and CHLOE stands on the threshold. She pauses a moment in amazement, then darts behind the high settle in the chimney corner. The pixies and "BRIDGET" dance fantastically.

GREEN JACKET. [*Laughing*] Not for a hundred years have pixy-men known sport like this.

RED CAP. What if the spell were broken?

BRIDGET. That can never be. No mortal knows of the Wise Woman.

GREEN JACKET. And there are pixies even who know not where she dwells.

A PIXY. I do not know.

ANOTHER. Nor I.

ANOTHER. Nor I.

BRIDGET. Do you not know? She dwells far in the forest by the haunted mere. And if a young maid visits her alone, at moonrise, she may learn perchance how to recall a mortal child from Fairyland. But no maid knows. We're safe! we're safe, my little pixy-men.

GREEN JACKET. Hark! What is that? A step upon the stair. [*The pixies crowd towards the door*]

BRIDGET. Soft! Wait, have no fear. I know the step. 'T will make us greater sport.

The door opens cautiously, and LUBIN stands on threshold with lighted candle in his hand.

BRIDGET and the pixies surround him; one of them snatches the candle from him. Taking hands, they dance round him singing:

Pixy-men have left their dance in the mazy ring;
Nearer they dance, I ween.
Listen to their whisperings; listen while they sing,
Little pixy-men in green.

[LUBIN *stands dazed, and finally covers his eyes with his hands. CHLOE'S frightened face is seen for a moment peeping above the settle*

Curtain

SCENE III. (*Same Room*)

A month has elapsed.

LUBIN *sits in the ingle nook, his arms folded, his head bent. Opposite to him, "BRIDGET" is seated, a book in her hand, out of which she pretends to be learning. Every now and then she glances across at him and laughs silently. MISTRESS WILLOW is spinning. All at once, MISTRESS WILLOW lays her head on her folded arms, and bursts into tears. "BRIDGET" springs up, and begins to dance silently behind her, waving her arms and laughing to herself. As the door opens, she hastily sits down again and buries her face in her book.*

Enter BETTY.

BETTY. Shall I light the candles? [*Crossing to her*] Mistress dear, don't fret. She will come back, I vow she will. Mistress Chloe will come back.

BRIDGET. [*Chanting to herself*]

Chloe's gone away,
There she will stay.
Never more will she come back,
Sing hey! sing hey! alack! alack!

MISTRESS W. Peace, heartless maid. Study your task. [*To BETTY*] Betty, it is a month to-night she went away.

BETTY. Ay! so it is. And 't is a month ago that I came down o' five o'clock to light the fire, and found poor Master Lubin sitting as he sits now, staring at nothing, like some daft ninny.

MISTRESS W. What *can* ail him, Betty?

BRIDGET. Nothing ails Lubin! He is my dear kind Lubin. He will not talk to you — no! But he talks to me. Don't you, dear Lubin? See! he will help me learn my lesson. [*She goes and kneels down beside LUBIN, who rouses a little, strokes her hair, and they whisper together*]

MISTRESS W. [*Sighing*] Put the candles in the window, Betty, and pull the curtains back.

BETTY. [*Cheerfully*] Yes. If she comes across the moor to-night, she 'll have the candle gleam to light her.

MISTRESS W. Ah! we have done all this so many times before, and yet she never comes.

LUBIN. [*Sharply, raising his head*] What step is that?

BRIDGET. [*Putting her arms round him*] No step, dear Lubin. Listen! You shall hear me say my task. [*He takes the book unwillingly, and she begins to whisper. BETTY and MISTRESS WILLOW have exchanged astonished glances. MISTRESS WILLOW half rises from her seat*]

MISTRESS W. Betty! he has not spoken so for weeks. *Is there a step? Go to the door and see.* [*BETTY obeys. Before she reaches the door, LUBIN again sharply raises his head and tries to rise*]

LUBIN. I know the step! It draws near across the moor. It is the step of someone — [*He passes his hand across his eyes and speaks dreamily*] Someone I have —

BRIDGET. [*Hastily*] Lubin, listen! Do I say it right? [*She tries to pull him back on to the seat,*

but at the moment the latch rattles. Everyone stands breathless, waiting. The door is flung open, and CHLOE stands on the threshold, wrapped in a long cloak]

MISTRESS W. Chloe!

BETTY. Mistress Chloe!

LUBIN. [*Dreamily*] Chloe—[BRIDGET holds him tighter. MISTRESS WILLOW makes as though she would run to her daughter, but CHLOE waves her back. Leaving the door wide, she goes straight to LUBIN, kneels beside him, and takes his hands]

CHLOE. Lubin, look at me.

BRIDGET. [*Wildly*] Lubin, you promised just to listen while I say my task.

CHLOE. Say after me these words:

Elfin child, depart, depart,
Take thy spell from out my heart.

BRIDGET. No, no, Lubin. Listen! listen!

[LUBIN dreamily murmurs the words, and BRIDGET falls back

CHLOE.

All your cunning is in vain;
Little Bridget comes again.

[LUBIN repeats the words. With a scream, BRIDGET covers her face with her hands

and rushes out at the open door. Wild music sounds a moment

LUBIN. [*In his natural voice*] Chloe, where have I been? Oh, I have had an evil dream! [*He kisses her*]

CHLOE. Hush! wait!

[*A voice outside*] Mother! Mother!

The real BRIDGET runs into the room, and rushes into her mother's arms.

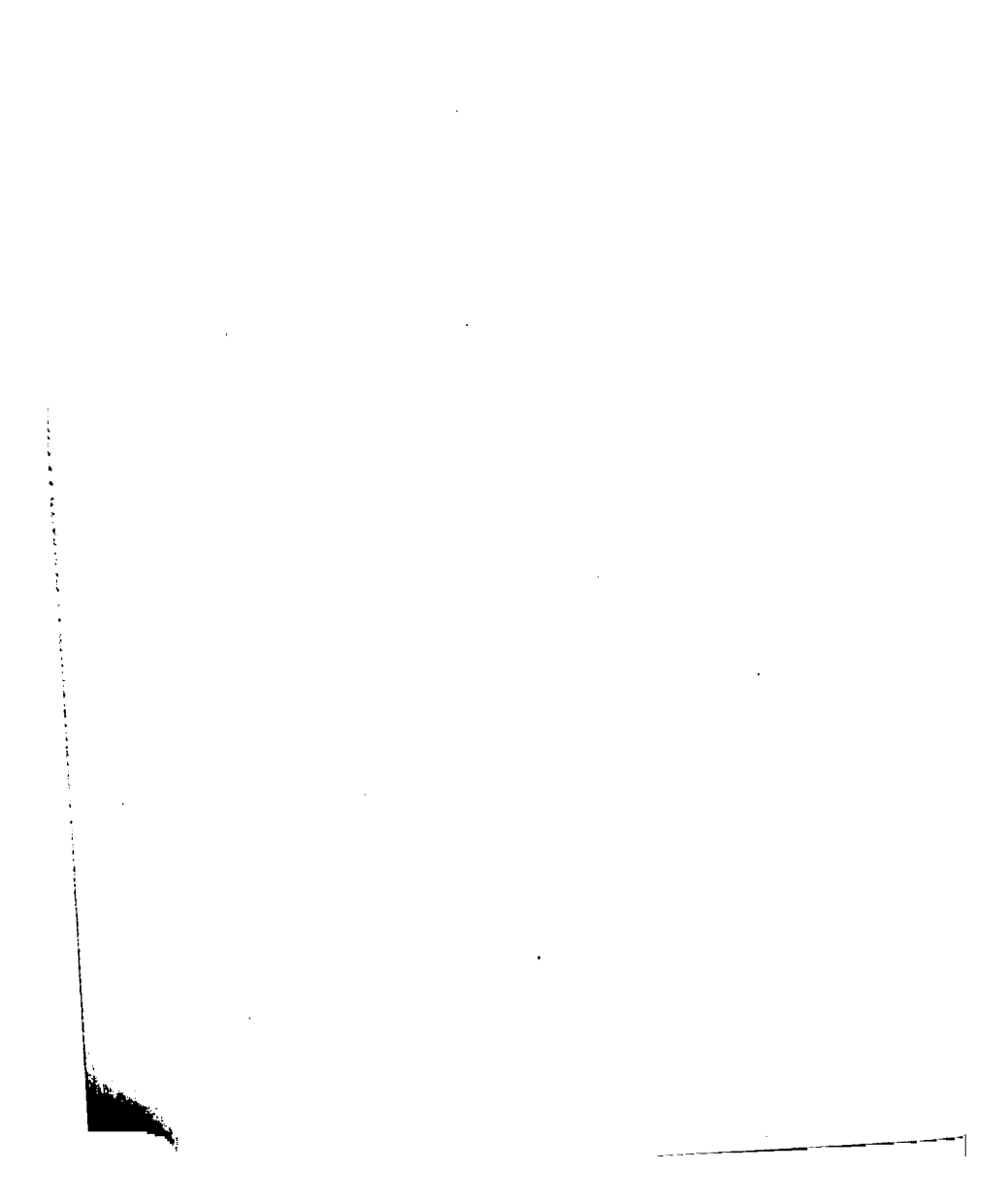
MISTRESS W. [*Incoherently, as she embraces her*] What is this? [*To CHLOE*] Where have you been, my daughter?

CHLOE. To the Wise Woman, mother. I've been long away, but — Wisdom is far to seek.

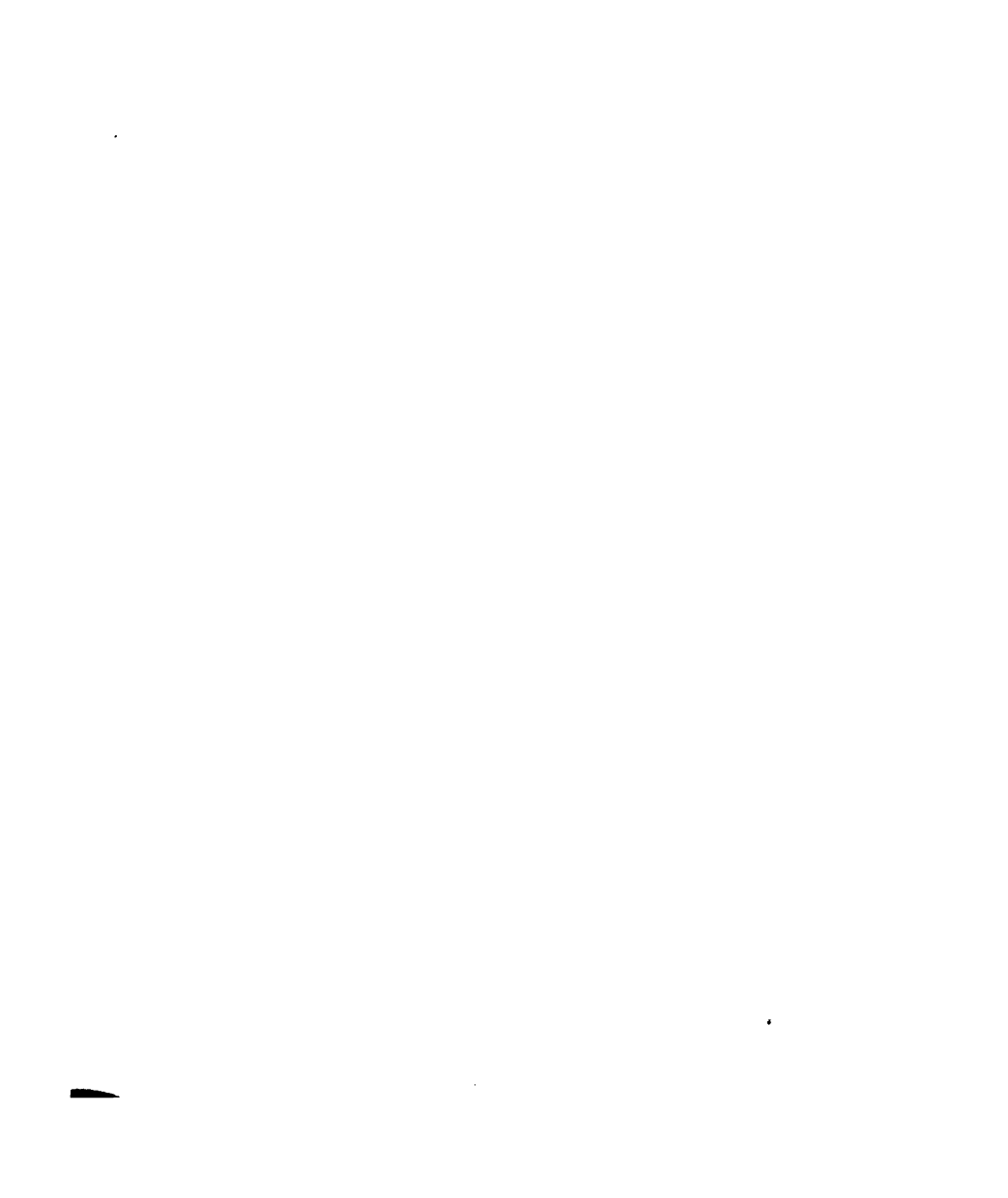
BETTY. Alack! 'T was nothing but a pixy-child. I always knew it!

CHLOE. The spell is broken, mother. She's come back to us. She is our own little Bridget!

Curtain



WHITE MAGIC



WHITE MAGIC

White Magic, like *The Dream-Lady*, is more appropriately played out of doors, though it, too, can be quite easily staged.

For general arrangement and points to be considered, see suggestions for *The Dream-Lady* which apply equally to this, or to any other pastoral play. With regard to the setting, however, an orchard or a little plantation is more suitable than any but a well-wooded garden.

MUSIC. As in *The Dream-Lady*, music, and always the same air, should herald the approach of the Dryad.

DRESS. See remarks under this heading in suggestions for *The Dream-Lady*. The Dryad's robe might be of clear green, or of white, faintly clouded with green, and she should wear a chaplet of leaves.

The goblins may be as fantastic as possible. The colour scheme might be red, purple, and russet

brown to suggest fallen leaves; the dresses themselves tight fitting and as Puck-like as may be. Stockings the colour of the dress, worn over shoes without heels, and stiffened into fantastic points, are effective.

I picture the fairies either in shades of green which will harmonise with the Dryad's robe, or in mist-like greys and blues. At any rate, they must be poetical, not tawdry, spangled fairies.

As the fairies have woven it, the dress of the Princess must also be poetical. I should preserve the "lily" idea of white and gold, with red roses for the hair. Walter Crane's *Flora's Feast*, or perhaps his *Tourney of the Lily and the Rose* may be found useful.

If neither the fairies nor the Dryad can sing, they may recite their verses to the accompaniment of soft music, and the fairies' song at the end might be sung "off," by a clear voice or voices.

WHITE MAGIC

CHARACTERS

THE QUEEN.	PRINCE FORTUNAS.
THE WITCH.	EDELBERT (his cousin).
PRINCESS PHILOMÈNE.	FAIRIES.
	GOBLINS.

SCENE.—*A wood. On the right, partly screened by trees, is a hut thatched with dry fern. Three crossed sticks with fuel beneath them, near the hut.*

Enter the QUEEN, a dark cloak covering her royal dress. She glances hurriedly from side to side, then knocks at the door of the hut. Door opens, and the WITCH appears. She wears a steeple hat, under which grey elf-locks are seen. Her dress is ragged, her arms bare, and she carries a broomstick.

WITCH. Thrice welcome, Queen! So you have come once more to visit the old witch? [*Chuck-*

ling] Ah! I thought you'd come. I waited for you. Affairs go crookedly without a little witchcraft, is it not so, my Queen?

QUEEN. Yes, I have work for you. But [*looking round apprehensively*] speak low, ~~I pray you~~. I fear the very trees, lest they have ears.

WITCH. Fear nothing, lady. Here, in the forest's shade, we're safe enough. What can I do for you?

QUEEN. Listen! Did you not tell me once, when first I listened to your witchcraft, that all your charms and spells had twice their power if they were whispered by a maiden?

WITCH. Yes, lady, that is true. An innocent young girl who learns my spells and charms, can work more evil in a day than I, with all my pains, can bring about in a long year.

QUEEN. And you would gladly teach your spells to such a maiden?

WITCH. That would I, noble Queen, with all my heart. Think of the mischief I could work with such a helpmate!

QUEEN. And if I find her for you, will you work for me? May I count on you for spells and charms when I have need of them?

WITCH. All the mischief I can compass shall be at your disposal, Queen. Who is the maiden?

QUEEN. [*Lowering her voice*] Philomène, my step-daughter.

WITCH. [*In astonishment*] Princess Philomène! Oh, you are rash, most noble Queen. The people love her. What will they say if she is absent from the Court?

QUEEN. Hear me speak. You know that Philomène has been from babyhood betrothed to the Prince Fortunus?

WITCH. Yes. 'T was the dead King's dearest wish, that much I know. Have they met as yet, this young Prince Fortunus, and Princess Philomène?

QUEEN. Never as yet. But even now the Prince is on his way from his far kingdom over seas, to claim his bride.

WITCH. [*Eagerly*] Well?

QUEEN. Old wife, the Prince is well named Fortunus. Rich he is, and handsome, and he rules broad lands. His Queen will be a woman to be envied.

WITCH. Ah! and you have a daughter of your own. Is that not so, O wily Queen?

QUEEN. My daughter Fredigonde shall wed Prince Fortunus. Hear my plan. The Princess

Philomène, so I have made it known, has gone to visit distant kinswomen before her marriage. Thus I shall silence babbling tongues at Court. The Princess Philomène meanwhile will be with you, here in the forest, learning witchcraft.

WITCH. And when the Prince arrives?

QUEEN. I 'll prove to him, and not to him alone, — to all the subjects in my kingdom, — that their beloved Princess deals in magic, is herself a witch.

WITCH. And as there 's still another Princess at the Court —

QUEEN. The Prince will marry Fredigonde and not Philomène.

WITCH. [*Chuckling*] Well planned! You should have studied magic. There 's a good witch wasted in your Majesty. . . . But tell me, when will you send to me the Princess Philomène?

QUEEN. She is here.

WITCH. [*Alarmed*] *Here!* but —

QUEEN. There 's no escape. She 's blindfolded. Stay but one moment.

[She disappears R., and a minute later re-enters, leading the PRINCESS, who is dressed poorly in peasants' clothes. A

handkerchief is bound over her eyes, and her hands are tied behind her back. The QUEEN unties her hands, and removes the handkerchief. The PRINCESS looks about her in a dazed fashion.

WITCH. Good-morrow, little Princess! So you've come to school with me.

PRINCESS. Where am I?

QUEEN. [*Mockingly*] Here in the forest, which you love so much.

PRINCESS. [*Shrinking from the WITCH*] But this — this is a witch!

QUEEN. Do not be jealous, daughter. *You'll* be a witch in time.

PRINCESS. [*Imploringly*] You will not leave me here?

QUEEN. Why, what is this? I thought you loved the forest? Only yesterday you longed to leave the palace, be a peasant maid, and live among the trees for ever. Well, now I grant your wish, give you a peasant's dress, and still you're not content. [*To WITCH*] See that the Princess studies well and quickly. If she is idle, you have the means to make her work. Soon I shall come again to find what she has learnt from you.

WITCH. Yes, yes. You must not linger, lest they miss you at the palace. [*The WITCH accompanies the QUEEN some distance R., talking in an undertone*] Farewell, my Queen; farewell. [*Exit QUEEN R., turning once to look back at PHILOMÈNE, who in despair has seated herself on a fallen log before the hut. WITCH, returning, addresses her*]

Now, my young mistress, why sit there and cry? Tears will but spoil your pretty eyes. Besides, what need is there for tears? Think what a clever little lady you'll become! I'll teach you to call sprites and evil goblins, at your will, and they shall work for you and do your pleasure.

PRINCESS. I *will* not call the evil sprites and goblins! It frightens me only to think of them.

WITCH. Softly, young mistress, with this talk of *will* and *won't*. Wait but a little, while I seek plants and poisonous weeds to make my brews. Then you shall learn the charms.

[*She begins to move away, but as the PRINCESS springs from her seat returns*] Oh, no, my pretty one! Think not of escape! Should I then leave my treasure undefended? [*Stretching out her broomstick, she makes a wide circle in the air, chanting meanwhile :*]

The magic ring I make
No earthly power can break ;
Strive, then, Princess, in vain,
Till I return again.

[*Hobbles away, laughing*]

[*When she is out of sight, the PRINCESS runs R. and L., but is everywhere met by an invisible barrier. Finally she sits down and covers her face with her hands. Soft strains of music, like the singing of birds, and the DRYAD comes stealing between the trees. She is crowned with a chaplet of oak leaves*

PRINCESS. [*Raising her head at sound of music, slowly rises in amazement*] Lady! . . . Who are you?

DRYAD. [*Smiling*] You shall guess. You do not know me, but I know you well, my little Princess Philomène.

PRINCESS. Where have you seen me?

DRYAD. Here in the forest. In the sweet spring-time, when I wake from sleep, I've watched you from my tree. I've seen you kneel beside my primroses and kiss their crinkled leaves, and stroke the silken blankets round my baby ferns.

PRINCESS. Do you take care of all the flowers and ferns?

DRYAD. Yes, all the flowers and ferns and singing birds are mine, and all the gentle furry creatures of the woods.

PRINCESS. Ah! now I know you. You are the good Spirit of the Forest. Often, so often, sitting in the sunshine, I have dreamt of you.

DRYAD. But there are dark things in the forest, too. Adders, and snakes, and poisonous roots and flowers.

PRINCESS. And over *these*, the wicked Witch has power? I see! I see! You are the good, she is the evil, Spirit of the Forest. . . . O dear Forest-lady, help me to escape from her!

DRYAD. I cannot break the enchanted barrier for you. But never fear. You shall not use her charms and wicked spells. *I'll* teach you to work magic, too, — White Magic.

PRINCESS. White Magic? What is that?

DRYAD. [*Smiling*] Only the other side of Black Magic.

PRINCESS. How can I learn it?

DRYAD. The Witch will teach you spells and incantations. You need but say them backwards, and

instead of evil sprites, the fairies will appear. Sweet flowers will spring instead of poisonous weeds, and curses turn to blessings.

PRINCESS. But when the Witch sees this, what will she do to me?

DRYAD. Trust me, Princess. The Witch shall never harm you. . . . See where she comes. Farewell, and have no fear.

[She glides back into the forest, and the music dies away after her

Enter WITCH.

WITCH. Well, pretty mistress, if you've tried the magic barrier, we will go within. See, I have brought the plants we need. Look! here is nightshade. This is henbane, and this, the precious mandrake root. Come, I will show you all their powers. Oh, what a pretty little witch we'll make of Princess Philomène.

She opens the door of hut, and the PRINCESS slowly enters. Enter PRINCE in disguise of huntsman, followed by EDELBERT, his cousin.

PRINCE. Come, my good Edelbert, let us rest awhile.

EDELBERT. With all my heart. [*They sit on fallen log*] Now, may I hope to learn why we have come on foot from yonder town; why you, my liege, are thus disguised in huntsman's dress; why we have left behind our train of servitors, our wedding gifts, all our brave retinue. Is this the way to woo a princess? Fie on you! Fie, my cousin Fortunus!

PRINCE. Edelbert, I need your help.

EDELBERT. [*Shrugging his shoulders*] Speak on, my liege. I am the most devoted of your servants.

PRINCE. Take horse and ride on to the palace; 't is close at hand. Say that the Prince has been delayed upon his journey, and will not reach the Court for a full month. Then get what speech you can of Princess Philomène. Bring her to ride with you here in the forest. Leave the rest to me.

EDELBERT. [*Smiling*] But wherefore?—if I may dare to question with my royal cousin?

PRINCE. It is my pleasure to woo this princess,—yes, and to win her, if I can—in this disguise.

EDELBERT. You are romantic, Prince—and I am idle, as you know. Yet I must needs obey.

PRINCE. Do this for me, good cousin Edelbert, and earn my thanks. The palace is at hand. Go

take my message ; see the Princess and come back to me.

EDELBERT. I go, my liege. But much I doubt your Princess.

PRINCE. [*Drawing from his doublet a picture, which he wears round his neck*] Look, Edelbert ! Is she the common Princess ?

EDELBERT. [*Smiling and shrugging his shoulders*] Farewell, my liege. Before the shadows lengthen I shall return with news of her. [*Exit EDELBERT*

[*Prince continues to gaze at the picture. Presently door of hut opens, and the PRINCESS comes out with a bucket in her hand. She sees the PRINCE, and starts as though she recognises him. Then she draws from her dress a miniature and glances from it to the PRINCE, as though comparing them. At last she steals softly behind the PRINCE, who has not yet noticed her, and looking over his shoulder, sees her own picture*

PRINCESS. [*Under her breath*] The Prince ! [*Re-covers herself*] Good-morrow, sir.

PRINCE. [*Starting, rises and looks wonderingly at her*] Good-morrow, pretty maid. Have you dropped down from the green trees ?

PRINCESS. [*Demurely*] No, kind sir. I come from yonder hut, to fetch some water at the spring.

PRINCE. Show me where it lies, and let me fill your bucket.

[*Excunt L., the PRINCESS pointing to the spring*

[*When they are out of sight, the WITCH appears at door of hut, shading her eyes with her hand*

WITCH. Where is the girl? She's long in coming. [*Peering forward*] Why, there's my mistress . . . and she's not alone! My lady's deep in talk. . . . Who can the gallant be? I'll summon all my goblin sprites, and learn his name.

[*She waves her broomstick and chants:*]

Evil sprites, thy help I need;
Swiftly at my bidding speed.

Enter little goblin sprites leaping and dancing grotesquely. They bow before WITCH, and dance fantastically.

WITCH. [*Beckoning to one of them*]

Malabo, draw near and see,
Who may yonder stranger be.

SPRITE.

Mistress mine, beware, beware;
Of the Stranger have a care
Lest your power be on the wane;
He woos the Princess Philomène.

WITCH. Not the Prince Fortunas!

SPRITE. Mistress, 't is he.

WITCH. By all ill omens, 't is a lucky chance!
Haste thee, my Malabo. Transform me to a raven
black as night. Then will I to the Queen, and
bring her back with me.

SPRITE. Dare you leave the Princess?

WITCH. She's safe. She cannot pass the magic
barrier.

SPRITE. If the Queen comes, what then?

WITCH. [*Chuckling*] Then shall she tell the
Prince that Philomène's a witch, and bid him watch
while his Princess calls hobgoblins and spirits such
as you.

SPRITE. Does she know the spell?

WITCH. Already she has learnt it. She's an apt
scholar, this little Princess Philomène. . . . But
haste thee to transform me, Malabo!

[*They go out R., the sprites leaping and
dancing round the WITCH*]

Enter PHILOMÈNE with the PRINCE, L.

PRINCESS. [*Apprehensively*] Oh, I have loitered! I fear the old dame's anger. [*She runs to hut, opens door, looks in and returns*] She is not there! Can she have gone to fetch fresh herbs? [*To PRINCE*] Am I indeed so like the Princess Philomène?

PRINCE. If I may trust her portrait, 't is the strangest likeness in the world.

PRINCESS. And so you are in truth the Prince? And you would woo the Princess in this guise?

PRINCE. In very truth, my pretty maid. You 've wrung my secret from me.

PRINCESS. [*Smiling*] What if I could bring to you the Princess Philomène? Set her before your eyes, here in the forest?

PRINCE. [*Laughing*] What if the trees had ears — or if the flowers could speak?

PRINCESS. Sire, 't were not so wonderful. Here in the forest, strange things come to pass. Return within an hour, and you shall see.

[*Voice in distance calling*] Hallo there! Hallo!

PRINCE. That's my friend's voice. I would not leave you, pretty maid, but that I must have speech

with him. I shall return. Farewell! [*He kisses her hand and goes out R.*]

PRINCESS. [*Clapping her hands delightedly*] Oh, happy chance! The Prince! The Prince! [*Sound of music*] And listen, 't is the Forest Lady.

Enter the DRYAD. PHILOMÈNE runs and kisses her hand.

DRYAD. Well, little Princess! So the Prince has come?

PRINCESS. He's come! He's better than my dreams. But [*indicating her ragged dress*] how can I prove to him I'm not a beggar maid?

DRYAD. [*Smiling*] You want a pretty dress to greet your Prince? Well, what are fairies for?

PRINCESS. The fairies! Yes, the fairies! And I can call them to me now. But, dear Forest Lady, 't is so new to me. Will you not call them? The time is passing. Soon he will return.

DRYAD. [*Sings*]

② ———
 Rise from the bracken,
 Thistledown, Thistledown;
 Rise from the bracken,
 Come hither to me.

Fly from the green bough,
 Flower-Foam, Flower-Foam.
 Fly from the green bough;
 I wait here for thee.

Two little Fairies enter, dancing lightly.

PRINCESS. [*Under her breath*] The fairies! At
 last I see the fairies!

DRYAD. [*To PRINCESS*] Tell them your wish.

PRINCESS. [*Half shyly kneels on the fallen log, and
 the Fairies come close to her*] Oh, little fairies, my
 Prince has come, and here am I, clad like a beggar
 maid.

THISTLEDOWN.

We will make a fairy dress
 For the beautiful Princess;
 White and gold of lilies fair,
 Reddest roses for her hair.

FLOWER-FOAM.

Little elves shall weave and spin
 Gleams of brightest sunbeams in,
 And to make her royal crown
 All the stars come crowding down

THISTLEDOWN.

Lilies, roses, sun and shade,
 Out of these our robes are made,

Thus we'll weave a fairy dress
For the beautiful Princess.

[Dancing round PHILOMÈNE, they lead her into the hut. The DRYAD meanwhile disappears amongst the trees]

Enter PRINCE, with EDELBERT.

PRINCE. What say you? She is not at the palace?

EDELBERT. No, my gracious liege. And from the grave face of the Queen, and from her nods and becks and sighs, I know not what to think.

PRINCE. What can be thought of Princess Philomène that is not good and sweet? Yet it is strange she is not at the Court.

EDELBERT. Strange indeed. Then, too, I have not told you of the passing of the bird.

PRINCE. The bird? What bird?

EDELBERT. Why, on a sudden, as I stood talking with the Queen, a great black bird, a raven as I think, flew past the casement window!

PRINCE. Well! What then?

EDELBERT. The Queen grew pale, begged me to pardon her — and left me. Thus dismissed, I straight took horse again and rode to you.

PRINCE. [*Suddenly*] See! Who comes here?

EDELBERT. [*Looking*] Prince! It is the Queen herself. She comes to seek you.

PRINCE. How does she think to find me here?

EDELBERT. That I know not. . . . Will you disclose yourself?

PRINCE. Yes. I would unravel all this mystery.

EDELBERT. Then I will leave you with her.

[*Bows to QUEEN and exit L.*]

PRINCE. [*Going forward and kissing QUEEN'S hand when she appears*] Madam, I am Prince Fortunas, as my good cousin Edelbert can vouch.

QUEEN. [*Agitatedly*] Yes! yes! Do not ask yet by what a happy chance I heard of your disguise. Prince! I am here to warn you.

PRINCE. To warn me, madam? Wherefore?

QUEEN. Against your promised bride, the Princess Philomène. [*Impressively*] Listen, Prince! She is a witch!

At the moment, the door of the hut is thrown open, and the PRINCESS appears on the threshold, clad in a beautiful robe. She comes out smiling till she sees the QUEEN, then she draws back.

[*The QUEEN, at first overcome with amazement, recovers herself, and points to the*
PRINCESS

Do you doubt my word? Look where she stands there in her witch's robe, all glittering like a queen. But an hour since, could you have seen her, she was a peasant maid —

PRINCE. [*Starting*] 'T was she herself! The Princess Philomène herself. [*Turning to her*] Princess, you hear these charges. Tell me they are false!

PRINCESS. They are false, my Prince.

WITCH. [*Who has entered L. after the appearance of the PRINCESS now steps forward*] No, no, my pretty mistress! Why so modest? [*To PRINCE*] Sire, for so young a pupil, she is marvellous. Would you see her work a spell she knows, — a spell to call up evil sprites and goblins?

QUEEN. Prince! Put her to the proof.

WITCH. [*To PRINCESS*] Stay, stay, my pretty mistress, while I fetch the magic cauldron, and the plants you need. 'T were well I waited on your Royal Highness lest you soil your beauteous gown. [*Mockingly*] So, while the old dame was away my pretty Princess must needs try her skill at witchcraft? — and with much success. Goblins and evil sprites

have shown much taste. [*Pointing to the PRINCESS's dress*] Is it not so, most noble Queen?

QUEEN. Peace, dame! Later my ministers shall deal with you. Go fetch the cauldron, and all you need to make your evil brews. [*To PRINCE*] Only to-day I heard of whom the Princess learnt her spells and charms. And much I fear that by her magic even now the Witch will find some means to save herself.

[*The PRINCESS has come slowly forward and stands silently waiting. The PRINCE goes to her and takes her hand*

PRINCE. It is not true, Princess? Tell me it is not true.

WITCH. [*Reappears with cauldron and a black sack*] Wait but a little, good my liege. Wait but a little, and you 'll see. Here is the hemlock and the mandrake root, and here [*touching sack*] are toads and newts and vipers for our brew. Come, little Princess! Show your powers!

[*She sets cauldron on the crossed sticks. The PRINCESS takes the plants and scatters them into it, then empties the contents of the sack, and makes magic passes over the cauldron, whispering to herself*

WITCH. Yes! yes! The charm works quicker when the words are whispered low. Right! Right, my Princess!

[PRINCE, *standing apart, looks anxiously on.* QUEEN *watches with ill-concealed delight.* Presently PRINCESS *raises her head and calls aloud*

All is ready! Come! Come! Come!

[*Strains of music. At the first sound the WITCH starts back, clinging to a tree.* QUEEN *gazes at her bewildered*

Enter the FAIRIES, singing and dancing.

From the wide, dim forest glades
Where the grass grows green and tall,
From the deepest leafy shades,
We have heard the fairy-call.

Words like sound of falling rain,
When the birds begin to sing,
Words as soft as whispering leaves
These alone the fairies bring.

[*Dancing, they presently disappear among the trees, the music dying away in the distance*

QUEEN. [*Agitatedly*] What is this?

[*The DRYAD. Music heralds her approach, and at the first sight of her the WITCH screams, covers her face with her hands, and rushes away*

WITCH. [*As she goes*] Alack! I must be gone!
I must be gone!
~~SPRIT~~
~~DRYAD~~ Go, join her, Queen. Your wicked plans have failed.

[*QUEEN, drawing her mantle about her, follows the WITCH*

④ [To PRINCE] Prince! Take your bride. 'Tis joy to me that you should woo her here, in the forest.

[To PRINCESS] Be happy, little Princess. And in the spring, when the sap mounts in all the forest trees, when skies are softly blue, and woodland flowers are opening, think of the Forest Lady waking from her sleep to bless your love through all the summer days.

MUSIC: ~~HARRY OUT~~
[PRINCE and PRINCESS kneel and kiss the hand of the DRYAD. Music steals upon the air, as she disappears amongst the trees

PRINCE. [*Passing his hand across his eyes as though dazzled*] This is a wonderland indeed, Princess! [*Looking at her*] You say you are no witch? In very truth you are, else how have you bewitched

me? [~~Kiss her~~] Come, my Princess! Work magic
all your life. White Magic,—the Magic of the
Fairies.

MUSIC, THEME

*[From behind the trees the fairies come steal-
ing. Joining hands, they dance round the
PRINCE and PRINCESS, as they wander
slowly away together, singing:]*

Words like sound of falling rain,
When the birds begin to sing
Words as soft as whispering leaves,
These alone the fairies bring.

[Their voices at last die away in the distance

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THE GIFT OF THE FAIRIES



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THE GIFT OF THE FAIRIES



THE GIFT OF THE FAIRIES

THIS play, rather more ambitious and difficult than the rest, perhaps, might quite well be acted by grown up, though quite young people.

THE SETTING. It requires a certain amount of stage scenery, though of a fairly simple nature. For instance, it should be quite possible to use the same materials differently arranged for workshop and turret-room. For the turret-room the whole scene could be pushed closer together to enclose a much smaller space than that needed for the workshop.

CLOUDLAND. Is less difficult to manage than it sounds. It should have a background of starry sky, a suggestion of fleecy cloud, and the appearance of being seen through a mist.

A very thick dark curtain pierced at irregular intervals with holes, behind which lights are placed, makes a beautiful sky. If this cannot be arranged, a *painted* night sky must extend across the stage.

To produce the misty effect, a light wooden frame, over which is stretched dark blue, or black tarlatan, should be placed in front of the stage, close to the footlights. (Such a gauze-covered frame as this is often used in tableaux.) On the *inside* of this frame, at the top, white or greyish festoons of muslin or gauze might be tacked, to suggest clouds. The floor should be covered with something grey, and the lighting should be soft and moonshiny.

DRESS. Hints for dresses may be gathered from some or all of the books mentioned under this heading in suggestions for the *Dream-Lady*.

THE GIFT OF THE FAIRIES

CHARACTERS

HANS (the clockmaker).

GRETCHEN (his wife).

OTTO (their son).

THE PRINCESS.

THE FAIRY GODMOTHER.

GERTRUD (attendant to the PRINCESS).

ACT I

THE CLOCKMAKER'S SHOP. *A quaint oak-panelled room, with small casement windows. Tall clocks stand against the walls. Smaller clocks on tables. Seated at one of these, the clockmaker, in leather apron, bending over the works of a small time-piece. A voice calling:*

Father! Father!

Door opens, and GRETCHEN, the clockmaker's wife, enters. She wears a full dark skirt, a velvet

bodice laced with ribbon, a handkerchief folded across her neck, and a white frilled cap.

GRETCHEN. Where 's Otto, father?

HANS. [*Angrily*] In a mad-house, for all I know. Let him keep out of my sight awhile : 't were best for him, I'm thinking !

GRETCHEN. [*With a sigh*] What has he done now?

HANS. See ! [*Showing works of clock*] I left him this to do. You 'd think a child had played with it ! Two hours have I sat here putting his work to rights. Work he can do better than I, when he 's a mind.

GRETCHEN. [*Sadly*] Ay, that 's it. That 's the strange thing. There 's not a quicker, cleverer lad than Otto in this world — when he 's a mind.

HANS. Nor a bigger fool and gaby when he has n't. [*Angrily*] And all your fault, say I.

GRETCHEN. My fault ? Why my fault ?

HANS. You know well enough. You, with your silly woman's pride and uppishness ! What should we, poor decent honest folk, want with a fairy god-mother ? A fairy godmother indeed ! Leave luxuries to sons of kings, I say. But no ! For *your*

son, a fairy godmother — no less. And what has come of it, I ask? What has she given the boy?

GRETCHEN. [*Slowly*] *The Fairies' Gift*. At least that's what she said.

HANS. And what is that? What is this precious gift? Does it put gold in the lad's pocket? Sense in his stupid head? Nine days out of ten, the boy's clean daft. He's like one of the figures on these clocks of mine [*pointing to them*] moved by a spring. He might not be alive at all! I tell you, wife, he is a laughing-stock. The whole town jeers at him and us, and asks what is this precious gift.

GRETCHEN. [*Proudly*] Let them jeer. There's not a woman in the town has such a handsome boy as Otto. As for the gift — I don't know what it is, but I believe in it. [*Going close to her husband and speaking softly*] Don't you remember, Hans, how nineteen years ago she came into the room, — this fairy godmother. Otto lay in his cradle, fast asleep, but when she came to him, he opened his blue eyes and smiled. Then she smiled too, and touched his lips, oh! you remember, Hans! and said, "Baby, I grant to you the Fairies' Gift."

HANS. And she was laughing at you, wife! The boy is mad. For one day that he's sensible and

bright, the' 're three of dulness and stupidity. Talk no more to me about the boy. I'm tired of him.
[*He rises angrily, and goes towards the door*]

GRETCHEN. Are you going, father?

HANS. Yes; up to the palace. I have all the clocks to wind to-day.

Door opens and the PRINCESS enters in disguise of a peasant girl. She wears a short woollen frock, a velvet bodice with a white chemisette. Red carnations are in her hair. She is followed by an Attendant, also in peasant's dress. The Attendant, who is much older than the PRINCESS, nervously draws her hood about her face.

PRINCESS. [*Gaily*] Good-morning.

HANS. [*Curtly*] Well, my lass, what can I do for you?

PRINCESS. [*Laughing*] Oh, you can show me all your pretty clocks.

HANS. [*Gruffly*] We don't make clocks to show to idle wenches.

PRINCESS. Ah! but my mistress sends me here to buy for her. If you are busy, sir, perhaps your son. . . . ? You have a son, I think?

HANS. Ay! he'll show you. Glad of an excuse to waste his time, I'll warrant. [*To wife*] Call him, mother.

GRETCHEN. [*Goes to door L. and calls*] Otto! Otto!

HANS. [*At door R.*] Mother, have you packed the knapsack for me? [*Exit*

GRETCHEN. [*Calling*] Coming, Hans. [*To the peasant girl*] Be seated, mistresses. My son is finishing a piece of work, but he'll not keep you long. [*Calling again*] Coming, Hans.

[*Exit*

GERTRUD. [*Agitatedly, when the door closes*] Princess! this is the maddest folly. [*Wringing her hands*] Oh! if the King, your father, should but hear! Come back, I do entreat you. What if this youth should know you?—see through your disguise—

PRINCESS. [*Laughing mischievously*] Why should he? The other townfolk have not guessed. I am a peasant maiden; nothing more. He will not know me.

GERTRUD. Oh, but the risk! the risk! Each time we come into the city—you in that dress—my heart is in my mouth.

PRINCESS. A foolish place for any heart, Gertrud. . . . There is no risk. And if there were, I'd gladly run it, just to live, and move. Oh, in the palace there, I cannot breathe!

GERTRUD. [*Blankly*] I do not understand your Royal Highness.

PRINCESS. [*Examining the clocks*] No? Well, perhaps I scarcely understand myself. . . . This Otto's long in coming. . . . He's handsome, Gertrud?

GERTRUD. [*Stiffly*] Your Highness said so, when last we came into the town, and watched him through the window yonder.

PRINCESS. [*Laughing*] When you wept tears of fright, and begged me not to enter. Well, I've had my will to-day. Tell me, Gertrud; you hear all the city gossip. What do they say about this boy, this Otto?

GERTRUD. They say he's mad, your Highness.

PRINCESS. [*Clapping her hands*] Oh, then I'm very sure he's charming. None of the princes of the Court are mad.

GERTRUD. They say the fairies came when he was christened, and so —

PRINCESS. [*Interrupting*] Hush, here he comes!
[*Door opens L., and OTTO enters. PRINCESS glances*

at him, and then turns to GERTRUD] [*With meaning*] You have marketing to do, Gertrud. I will not keep you. Return for me in half an hour.

GERTRUD. [*In distress*] Oh, but —

PRINCESS. [*Repeats, smiling*] I will not keep you. [*Under her breath, on pretence of hanging the market basket on the arm of GERTRUD*] Go!

[*GERTRUD reluctantly goes out. Meantime, OTTO, who has recognised the PRINCESS, stands immovable, gazing at her*

OTTO. [*Under his breath*] The Princess! [*Before she turns to him again he has recovered himself, and the PRINCESS does not know she is discovered*]

OTTO. What can I do for you, fair mistress?

PRINCESS. My lady says you make some curious clocks. She wishes me to look at one for her.

OTTO. Who is your lady?

PRINCESS. She is — the Princess.

OTTO. The Princess! You are —?

PRINCESS. Just her little maid. A foster-sister. . . . She . . . she is fond of me, I think.

OTTO. [*Slowly*] That is no marvel. [*Dreamily*] Is she as beautiful as you?

PRINCESS. [*Startled*] You have not seen her, then?

OTTO. Who knows? I see your face and I forget all else.

PRINCESS. Sir! . . . these are no words for simple peasant maids.

OTTO. Is "peasant maid" the name for stars and flowers?

PRINCESS. You jest. We spoke of the Princess. What do they say about her, here in the city?

OTTO. They say she is the fairest lady in the world, — and till to-day I have believed them. They say she's merry, generous, keen of wit —

PRINCESS. [*Interrupting*] Do they say that she is wearied, wearied to death of all the dreary Court? Do they say she hates the foolish princes who come clamouring for her hand?

OTTO. No! Is it true?

PRINCESS. Yes, it is true. I know her well, you see. She tells me all her secrets. Oh! she is tired, tired of it all. Sometimes she'd rather be a simple peasant maid like me, she says, and live and breathe in freedom, than just a mere doll, — something to hang robes of state and jewels on!

OTTO. The Princess, then, is restless? poor Princess!

PRINCESS. Yes, and of late she grows more restless, harder still to satisfy.

OTTO. Of late, you say? Why so?

PRINCESS. Oh! she is foolish, this Princess. Think! she has jewels, gold, a palace — what you will. Yet she is troubled by a voice.

OTTO. A voice?

PRINCESS. Yes. Sometimes, at night, she hears a voice under her window, — a voice that sings of love. And to her fancy the singer is a man, not a poor shadow, like the princes. And day by day she hates the princes more, and longs to meet the singer.

OTTO. [*Bending over some work of the table*] Has she not seen him, then?

PRINCESS. No. He screens himself among the myrtles and the orange trees. She only hears his voice.

OTTO. But he may be unworthy — not a prince at all.

PRINCESS. A prince, she says, he is, though, maybe in disguise.

OTTO. [*Bitterly*] Tell the Princess to have a care. Some mad presumptuous fool perchance sings near her window.

PRINCESS. Ah! if she did but know. [*A pause*]

OTTO. [*Suddenly*] Will you tell her?

PRINCESS. [*Starting*] I? Tell her?

OTTO. [*Taking down his lute from the wall*]
Tell her — yes. And bid her give the madman a
dungeon for his folly.

[*He sings. At the first line of the song the
PRINCESS starts, and in amazement keeps
her eyes fixed upon OTTO*

A rose there is, high up in sunny air,
A sweet red rose that hangs far out of reach ;
Yet there is nothing in the world so fair,
And nothing in this world will wisdom teach.

While roses sway high up against the sky,
All their dear sweetness ever out of reach,
So long will lovers' hearts beat high, beat high,
And nothing in this world will wisdom teach.

There hangs the rose, and here the lover stands,
All that he loves for ever out of reach,
Stretching in vain, in vain, his empty hands,
And nothing in this world will wisdom teach.

[*At the last line the PRINCESS starts to
her feet*

PRINCESS. [*Incoherently*] You — ?

GERTRUD [*At door, agitatedly*] Princess !

Curtain

ACT II

A week later

SCENE — *A turret-room. The FAIRY GODMOTHER, a little old lady with white hair, sits spinning by the fire. She wears the traditional dress of a fairy godmother. A knock.*

GODMOTHER. Come in!

Enter PRINCESS, this time dressed as befits her rank, but covered with a long cloak, which she throws aside.

GODMOTHER. [*Briskly, concealing a smile*] Well, god-daughter. What brings you here? Fresh mischief, I'll be bound.

PRINCESS. [*Evasively*] Oh, godmother, — the princes are so dull!

GODMOTHER. And so you toiled up all these stairs to tell me that! How thoughtful of you! . . . What have you done to mitigate their dulness?

PRINCESS. [*Demurely*] You use such long words, godmother. . . . I only went —

GODMOTHER. Into the town — to seek a prince of your own choosing.

PRINCESS. No! *really*. Only to — to — seek adventure.

GODMOTHER. Well! to do him justice, Otto is a very fair adventure — a handsome lad.

PRINCESS. [*Startled*] How did you know? [*Pettishly*] Oh! I forgot you were a fairy. [*A pause, during which the PRINCESS nervously plays with the flax on the spinning-wheel — then breaks out suddenly*] He may be handsome, but I hate him! There's no one in this world I hate so much!

GODMOTHER. [*Still ironically*] Poor Otto! He always seemed to me a kindly lad. The weakness of a godmother, no doubt.

PRINCESS. [*Surprised*] You his godmother?

GODMOTHER. Yes. His mother called me. I go where I am bidden, as you know, and sometimes those who call me rue the day. But that's beside the mark. You have not told me yet why you hate Otto.

PRINCESS. I — I can't.

GODMOTHER. Let me see. Some weeks ago you dressed yourself in peasants' clothes (they are be-

coming, I admit) and wandered through the town. There you saw Otto — working, for a wonder. Another day, you ventured in, and he made love to you —

PRINCESS. [*Interrupting*] Yes, he did! he did! *His* was the voice I heard. The voice I never can forget. And now —

GODMOTHER. You went a third time? Well?

PRINCESS. He was quite changed. He answered “yes” and “no.” He — he — I think he had forgotten me.

GODMOTHER. [*Reflectively*] Yet a princess who one morning walks into a workshop should make *some* impression.

PRINCESS. [*In tears*] Godmother, why do you laugh at me?

GODMOTHER. [*Patting her hand kindly*] There! there, my child, don't cry. The silly boy is desperately in love.

PRINCESS. [*Joyfully*] *Really?* Then why? —

GODMOTHER. He was not there at all.

PRINCESS. Not there? But —

GODMOTHER. I know you thought you saw him. But it was not Otto. He had escaped — gone to the Magic Country.

PRINCESS. The Magic Country? Where is that?

GODMOTHER. Ah! can I make you understand? You, who have not the Fairies' Gift.

PRINCESS. Tell me. I can try.

GODMOTHER. Well — when he pleases, Otto has the power to go away, into the Magic Land, leaving a sort of ghostly Otto in his place. A being with his form, his voice, his look — but not his mind. At this very moment, I've no doubt, Otto is seeking you in forests, or by lone seashores, or in the stars. Anywhere, in fact, but where he might be meeting you — here — in the World of Every Day.

PRINCESS. [*Wonderingly*] Is *that* the Gift? It is — uncomfortable.

GODMOTHER. [*Drily*] Most gifts are. But mortals should not call in fairy godmothers. . . . Listen! I hear a step upon the stairs.

PRINCESS. I'll run and see. [*She goes out, and a moment later returns, speaking excitedly*] Godmother! It's Otto! He's coming up and up the winding stairs. He did not see me —

GODMOTHER. [*Opening door into inner room*] Wait in there. When this clock strikes seven, and not before — come out.

PRINCESS. Yes — yes — dear godmother. [*Has-
tily closes door after her. A knock*]

GODMOTHER. Come in! [*OTTO enters. He
kneels and kisses her hand*] Well, godson! You
look gloomy. What is wrong with you?

OTTO. Everything!

GODMOTHER. Dear! dear! Tragedies should be
thoroughgoing, I admit.

OTTO. Godmother! I want you to take back
the Fairies' Gift.

GODMOTHER. Take back the Gift? But why?

OTTO. What does it bring to me but misery?

GODMOTHER. Well, I don't know. A mere prin-
cess, perhaps?

OTTO. Do not mock me! *I* to love a princess!
Oh, no doubt she mocks me too!

GODMOTHER. I should find out, if I were you.
Since that delightful little concert in the workshop
yonder, where have you been? Here, or in the
Magic Country? Out with it!

OTTO. In the Magic Country — dreaming of her.

GODMOTHER. A very helpful occupation.

OTTO. No. Do not laugh at me. Only take
back the Gift. Then I shall be content as others are
— forget the Princess, find the Real World sweet —

marry some peasant maid. Only take back the Gift.

GODMOTHER. I cannot, even if I would. A fairy gift, bestowed at birth, can never be recalled.

OTTO. [*Bitterly*] A gift? A gift, you say! It is a curse.

GODMOTHER. Be that as it may, 't is yours for ever. [*She looks at clock, rises, and puts her hand on OTTO's shoulder*] Stay here for me, until the clock strikes seven, then I will come again to talk of this. I have a charm that must be written before the moon rises. Wait till I return — [*Mockingly*]. If you can bear the Real World for so long!

[*She enters the inner room. OTTO wanders restlessly about, and presently discovers a miniature of the PRINCESS. He takes it up and kisses it*

OTTO. [*To himself*] My Princess! The Princess who is only mine in my own Magic Country. [*Looking despairingly round the room*] I cannot stay here, in this dull Real World. I will go seek her in the Land of Dreams.

He leans slowly back in his chair, and lets his head sink upon his breast. The clock strikes seven. At the last stroke, the PRINCESS enters.

PRINCESS. [*Demurely*] Good evening, Otto!

OTTO. [*Raises his head slowly, and looks at her, then speaks as in a dream*] Good-evening, mistress.

PRINCESS. [*Almost in tears*] Do you not know me?

OTTO. [*In dull mechanical voice*] I — I — cannot remember —

By this time the FAIRY GODMOTHER has entered. She stands in the background, and the PRINCESS turns to her, crying.

PRINCESS. Oh, godmother, this is not Otto.

GODMOTHER. Escaped again? And here stands the Princess! [*Chuckling*] Well! it serves him right. It serves him right.

PRINCESS. Oh, godmother! I am so miserable, and yet you laugh.

GODMOTHER. Forgive me, child! Merely a most unlucky sense of humour. It would have ruined me, I must admit, had I been mortal. [*To OTTO*] Sir, if your machinery will carry you thus far, there is the door. Good-day. [*To PRINCESS*] Habit makes one civil, even to a lay figure.

OTTO. [*In dull voice*] Good-day, mistress, good-day. [*Goes out slowly*]

GODMOTHER. [*To PRINCESS*] Come, come, my child. If you had been a Fairy Godmother as long as I have, you'd find it best to laugh.

PRINCESS. But, godmother, if Otto lives only in the Magic Country, and I am always in the World of Every Day, we cannot meet.

GODMOTHER. Who knows? Otto is not *quite* a fool. I've hopes of him. Or you might try to find him in the Magic Land. A little of the Magic Country would not hurt you.

PRINCESS. [*Eagerly*] How can I get in?

GODMOTHER. Ah! You must find the gate yourself. With Otto, the workshop walls slip all too easily away, and he steps out at will into the Magic Land, on to a yellow shore, it may be, where the waves are breaking, or into the green heart of some great forest. But then he has the Gift.

PRINCESS. Oh, godmother, can I not have it too?

GODMOTHER. [*Smiling*] No, no, my child. It is bestowed at birth. I cannot give it later. But you may learn — there are so many ways into the Magic Land, and when princesses are in love — [*She laughs*]

PRINCESS. Can you not help me then by any charm?

GODMOTHER. Certainly, here is a book full of them.

PRINCESS. [*Looking at it*] Why, this has Otto's name upon it! Does Otto then write books?

GODMOTHER. He is a poet. [*Mysteriously*] That's what's the matter with him.

PRINCESS. [*Bending over an open page*] Oh! but I would not have him cured. See! This is beautiful — [*She eagerly points to one of the poems*]

GODMOTHER. I think you'll find your way into the Magic Land, Princess.

[*The PRINCESS stands absorbed, reading, while the FAIRY GODMOTHER regards her with a smile*

Curtain

ACT III

SCENE.— *Cloudland. Part of the Magic Country.
White hazy clouds, with a background of sky
and stars. A faint light as of the moon.*

OTTO, *with his lute, sings :*

Into the World of Dreams,
Floats my Princess,
Stars in her dusky hair,
A white cloud for her dress.

Through the glimmering moonlit haze,
See, she draws nigh ;
Love wings her flying feet
Through the trackless sky.

See, she rises ever higher,
To my dwelling fair,
A palace built of moonlit clouds,
My castle in the air.

*[At the last words he rises, stretching out his
hands to the PRINCESS, who comes dressed
in trailing cloudy white, stars in her hair,
stars shining as though entangled in her
dress*

OTTO. Welcome, my Princess! You bring the stars with you, and all the radiance of the moonlight. It was not hard to find the way?

PRINCESS. No. It grows easier now. I did but think of moonlit skies and stars, and then the palace walls melted away, and soon I heard your voice, my Otto.

OTTO. Ah! when you speak it is so easy to deceive myself, and think you are indeed the Princess.

PRINCESS. As indeed I am!

OTTO. [*Shaking his head*] No, no. Only a Dream Princess who does not live, out of the Magic Country.

PRINCESS. [*Earnestly*] Otto, believe me, I am the Princess, and no vision of your own imagining. If I am in the Magic Country, 't is because you wish it so.

OTTO. [*Smiling*] Do I not know how I should see you in the World of Every Day? I should be standing in the crowd as you drove past, and maybe you would throw a careless glance upon "mad Otto," — the fool who dares to love a princess.

PRINCESS. Speak no treason of Prince Otto, sir!

OTTO. Prince Otto?

PRINCESS. Did I not tell you he was in disguise?

OTTO. Speak plainly to me.

PRINCESS. He is a poet. Therefore a prince of nobler birth than any at the Court.

OTTO. [*Sighing*] Ah, this Magic Land! This Dream Princess! She is too sweet, too kind.

PRINCESS. [*Persuasively*] In the Real World, Otto, she is no less kind.

OTTO. Now she is cruel, for she mocks at me.

PRINCESS. But will you never seek her in the World of Every Day?

OTTO. Never. Why should I waken from a dream so sweet?

PRINCESS. Then we shall meet only in the Magic Country.

OTTO. Only here.

PRINCESS. [*After a pause, breaking into a laugh*] Oh, Otto, Otto, you are too absurd! Here am I, real, *real*, no Dream Princess. I am alive and waiting for you in the World of Every Day. And there you stand and shake your head, and tell me I'm a dream!

OTTO. [*Putting his arm round her*] You are the realest Dream Princess, in any Magic Country!

PRINCESS. [*Half crying*] Otto, in the Real World we might be happy too.

OTTO. In the Real World, for me, there's no Princess.

PRINCESS. [*Hopelessly*] What can I say? My words are useless. . . . Sing me one farewell song before I go.

OTTO. Gó? You will go?

PRINCESS. In the Real World there is much to do; you have forgotten that. A princess cannot stay for ever in the Magic Land; she has her duties.

OTTO. [*Slowly, as though to himself*] In the Real World there is much to do. Yes, I had forgotten that.

PRINCESS. Sing to me once and let me go.

OTTO. I cannot keep you. Well I know that fair dreams vanish when they will. [*Strikes his lute*]

Back to the moonlit sky,
Go, Princess of Dreams;
Here I am left to sigh
By magic streams,

Streams which flow to magic seas
Swayed by no tide,
By whose shores all vain desires
Grow satisfied.

*He kneels, kisses the hem of the PRINCESS's dress,
and she sorrowfully leaves him. OTTO stands*

gazing after her. While he is standing so, the FAIRY GODMOTHER enters unperceived, and as he turns, sighing, he confronts her.

GODMOTHER. [*Sharply*] Now, godson, don't pretend you're glad to see me, for that's absurd. You thought yourself secure, — here in this precious country of your own imagining. Am I not right?

OTTO. [*Confused*] Well, yes — I —

GODMOTHER. You forgot you had a *fairy* for a godmother! But bless the boy! You've left the Real World far enough behind, and no mistake. Fairy as I am, I found it hard enough to follow you. Yet the Princess comes, I see.

OTTO. Yes, godmother.

GODMOTHER. Poor child, she must be desperately in love.

OTTO. Is it kind to speak as though she loved me? You, who know well 't is nothing but a dream.

GODMOTHER. [*Tapping her wand angrily on the ground*] And if it is a dream what right have you to dream it? Shame on you, my godson! Shame on you! If I bestowed on you the Fairies' Gift, was it that you might use it in fashion such as this? The Magic Land is well enough, but there's the

Real World too. Oh, it is fine to live up in the clouds like this, no doubt. But there below, your father growls, your mother weeps. And little wonder when she hears the neighbours sneer and scoff! Yes, now you clench your fists. But fists are useless up among the clouds. And then the Princess —
[She breaks off suddenly]

OTTO. *[In a shamed voice]* Say nothing of the Princess. She takes no thought of me *[bitterly]* except, no doubt, to scoff, as all the neighbours do.

GODMOTHER. And even so, would you be worthy of her if she cared for you? Think you a woman — princess or peasant-maid — is proud to have a mooning, selfish, helpless lover, such as you've become?

OTTO. *[After a pause]* Godmother, you are right. I am ashamed.

GODMOTHER. I'm glad to hear it! . . . Now will you make and keep one promise?

OTTO. If I can.

GODMOTHER. It will be hard, but you can do it. For a whole year you promise not to leave the World of Every Day. Not once must you set foot upon the Magic Land.

OTTO. [*Slowly*] Not once to see the Princess in my dreams.

GODMOTHER. [*Drily*] You've taught her to come here. Now she has learnt the road, you cannot hope to find her in the World of Every Day.

OTTO. [*Slowly*] No. I shall never find her. But I begin to see that if one loves a princess one must not be an idler and a coward. [*Kisses hand of GODMOTHER*] Come! Let us go back, then, to the World of Every Day.

Curtain

ACT IV

SCENE. — *The workshop. A year has elapsed.*

GRETCHEN *is dusting the clocks and putting things in order.*

Door opens to admit HANS, who carries a bag of tools.

HANS. [*With gratification in his tone*] Well, wife, I've news! One of the princes at the Court has bought the clock our Otto made.

GRETCHEN. [*Delightedly*] Not really, Hans!

HANS. Yes, and he wants another. All the fine ladies of the Court were praising it to-day. They say it's wonderful — oh, and I know not what!

GRETCHEN. [*Proudly*] Ah! *he* is wonderful. Has he not altered, Hans?

HANS. [*Setting to work at the table*] Yes, he's got his wits about him now, I must admit.

GRETCHEN. Wits! I should think so. [*Laughing*] Never shall I forget how Fritz, the cobbler, stared when Otto turned upon him one fine day and challenged him to fight. That was a year ago. Not

once since then has he been dull and stupid as he used to be.

HANS. That reminds me, wife. I heard some news up at the palace.

GRETCHEN. What was that?

HANS. It may be silly gossip, like enough. Yet when I heard it I could but think of our boy, Otto.

GRETCHEN. Why of Otto?

HANS. They say the Princess is bewitched.

GRETCHEN. *Bewitched?* What do they mean?

HANS. Why, for a whole year past, she's lived and moved as in a dream,—just as our Otto did, before his senses came to him.

GRETCHEN. Poor pretty lady! Do you think it's true?

HANS. [*Shrugging his shoulders*] Who knows? The King, they say, is half distracted. All the Court physicians have been called in vain. At last, so rumour says, the King sent for his daughter's Fairy Godmother.

GRETCHEN. He should have thought of her before. She is a powerful fairy. What did she say?

HANS. She said the spell was of such strength that only the mightiest of magicians could release the Princess.

GRETCHEN. Have they found the wizard?

HANS. Not yet. The Fairy knows his name, they say, but will not tell the King until he swears to give his daughter's hand in marriage to her deliverer.

GRETCHEN. Poor little Princess!

A rap at the door. GRETCHEN opens it, and admits the FAIRY GODMOTHER. GRETCHEN, overwhelmed with surprise, curtsies low. HANS rises and makes an awkward bow.

GODMOTHER. Well, my good people! Have you heard the news?

GRETCHEN. No, gracious lady.

GODMOTHER. Your walls are thick. The town is ringing with it. Go out, and you will hear the clashing of the bells.

HANS. What is it, lady?

GODMOTHER. The King will give his daughter's hand in marriage to the mightiest magician in his kingdom.

HANS. Can he be found, most gracious lady?

GODMOTHER. Of course he can. Else why do I come here?

HANS. [*Stammering*] Here?

GODMOTHER. Why, bless the man, of course!
Is not your son a poet?

HANS. Otto!

GODMOTHER. Otto, to be sure. Did n't you hear
me grant to him the Fairies' Gift?

HANS. [*In dazed voice*] I did, most noble lady.
But —

GODMOTHER. Ah! You do not understand!
Well, well, how should you? And you were right,
quite right, to keep him to his clockwork. Now he's
a credit to you, and I'm glad of it. [*She shakes the
clockmaker's hand*]

[*Turning to GRETCHEN with a smile*] As for you
— well! you're his mother, that's enough to say.
Now may I see my godson?

HANS. [*Going to door*] I'll send him to you,
lady.

[*When her husband has gone, GRETCHEN
hurriedly kisses the hand of the FAIRY
GODMOTHER*

GRETCHEN. I *knew* it was a precious gift you gave
my boy. I was content to wait. [*Goes out, wiping
her eyes with her apron*]

A moment later OTTO enters.

OTTO. Godmother! What does this mean? Is my father mad?

GODMOTHER. [*Ironically*] Ah! *now* I see you're reasonable indeed.

OTTO. [*Laughing*] I pray you, tell me.

GODMOTHER. There's nothing more to tell. Bring back the Princess from the Magic Land, and she is yours — as she has always been.

OTTO. [*Incredulous*] Godmother! Is this true?

GODMOTHER. Try.

OTTO. Then I may go and seek her in the Magic Land? [*Softly*] It is a year, a year to-day, since I have seen it.

GODMOTHER. No; you must call her to the World of Every Day. While you've been toiling in the workshop, she, poor child, has wandered through the Magic Land in vain.

OTTO. My poor Princess! How shall I bring her back?

GODMOTHER. You know best. You have n't studied common sense a whole long year for nothing. Call your Princess. She'll find her lover worthy of her now.

[*OTTO kneels and kisses her hand, and the FAIRY GODMOTHER goes out, smiling at*

him. OTTO hesitates a moment then takes his lute, and sings :

Come, dear my love, out of the World of Dreams,
Linger no more by the enchanted streams,
Leave the pale glimmering clouds and come away
Back to the love-lit Land of Every Day.

Here in the Real World now, your lover stands,
Let him not stretch in vain his empty hands,
Ah, sweet red rose, no longer out of reach,
The Real World with its work doth wisdom teach.

As he sings the last line, the door is flung open and the PRINCESS appears in her Dream-Country robe of trailing white, with stars in her hair.

OTTO. [*Starting up, cries joyfully*] Princess !
[*He runs towards her, and puts both arms round her*]

PRINCESS. Otto, I heard your voice, even in the Magic Land. See ! [*pointing to her dress*] I came straight to you, out of the Dream-Country.

[*As she speaks, the workshop grows flooded with sunlight*]

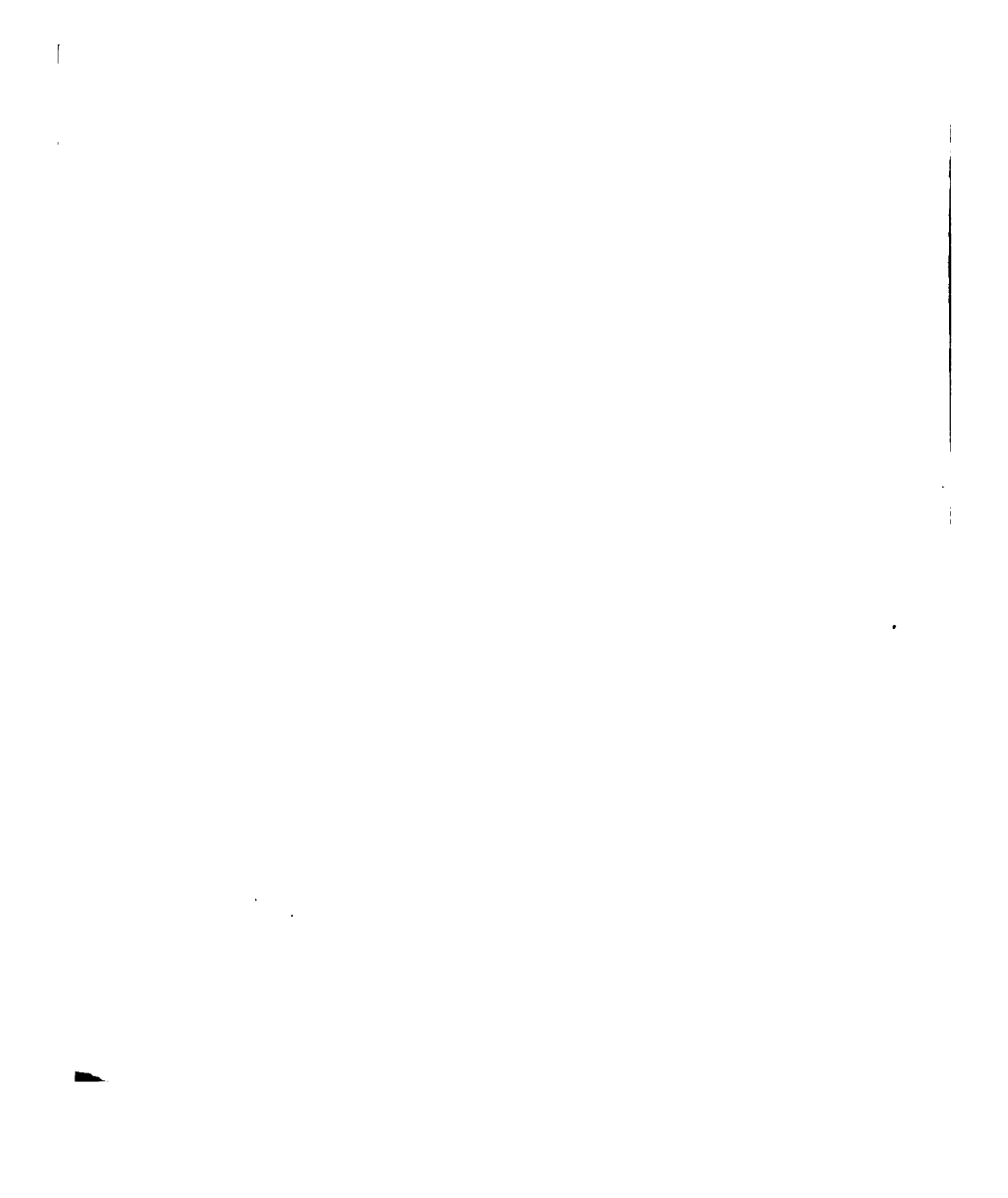
OTTO. [*Pointing to the walls*] See ! See ! my Princess !

PRINCESS. [*Dreamily*] The walls are melting everywhere away. I see the blue sky and the waving trees. It is the Magic Country!

OTTO. Ah! we will keep it so for ever. For us the Magic Land lies ever round the World of Every Day.

[*He kisses the PRINCESS*

Curtain



THE WONDERFUL ROSE

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THE WONDERFUL ROSE

THIS tiny play might be arranged with very little trouble in a country house.

SETTING. An old-fashioned hall, especially if it contains a staircase and a wide fireplace, would lend itself admirably, and be more suitable than the conventional, improvised stage. The part selected for the performance should of course be separated from the audience by a curtain, and a row of footlights.

EXITS AND ENTRANCES FOR THE PERFORMERS. These must depend upon the conveniences the selected "stage" affords. Rosamund could make her first entrance by way of the staircase, and if there should be no door on the opposite side which might reasonably be supposed to lead into the open air, it should not be difficult to arrange one, with the help of screens.

THE LIGHTING. Throughout the play the stage is rather dim. The light of a big fire should be the

chief illumination, and the footlights should be kept low.

CHARACTERS. See remark under this head in suggestions for the *Dream-Lady*. Rosamund must possess a sweet voice.

DRESS. For the principal characters this is perhaps sufficiently indicated in the stage directions, but a word must be said concerning the Spirits of the Spring. They must look as ethereal and vision-like as possible. Some should be young girls, others children. The girls should wear trailing, clinging robes of green gauze, each one of a different, but harmonising shade of green. There need be very little "making" in these robes. First should come a long narrow under-dress of green silk or sateen, falling straight from the neck. Over this, gauze or net of the same colour should hang loose, like a cloud. The arms should be bare, but long falling "angel" sleeves might be just fastened at the wrist, to give, when the arms are outstretched, the effect of wings. Some of the children might wear short narrow garments of soft white muslin or silk, hanging straight to the knee. Most of the Spring Spirits should carry flowering branches (very realistic ones

are to be bought at many London shops). Some might wear garlands, others bunches of flowers in their hair. Hints as to poetical costumes of this kind are to be gathered from Walter Crane's charming *Flora's Feast*. The great thing to be remembered, is that dressmaking should be sedulously avoided.

MUSIC. The musicians (violinists, if possible) should be concealed from the audience. This can easily be managed by the help of a screen. A gallery, if there should happen to be one in the hall, would of course be the best of all places for music.

The Vision of Spring needs careful management, and must be treated as poetically as possible. Unless you are prepared for a little trouble it will be best merely to keep the stage rather dim, and not to attempt effects of lighting which will probably prove unsuccessful. The following remarks therefore are made on the assumption that the lighting is in skilful hands, and has been rehearsed. I would suggest, then, that at the first appearance of the Spring Spirits, the stage should be dim. They should be seen as vague shapes, some stealing down the staircase, others silently crowding through the door. Then the light should gradually increase, till at the

end of the song they stand brightly illumined. It should disappear, and all the figures be left in shadow when Mistress Merrow enters, and once more the light should touch them while they stand singing the last verse. Is it necessary to remark that no pantomime effects of coloured fire should be employed? The light should seem that of white sunshine.

THE WONDERFUL ROSE

CHARACTERS

MISTRESS CHAMPNEY (a neighbour). THE PRINCE.
ROSAMUND (her daughter). MISTRESS MERROW.

SCENE. — *A big kitchen in a farmhouse, with quaint settle, high dresser, etc. A fire burns on the hearth, beside which is a spinning-wheel.*

Beside the fire, knitting, sits a portly, comfortable woman. She wears an ample skirt of homespun, a kerchief folded on her breast, and a frilled cap.

A knock. She rises and goes to door. Enter another woman, dressed in long cloak with hood.

MISTRESS MERROW. Good-evening, neighbour.
It's a cold night. I did not think to have a guest.
Sit thee down. Sit thee down and warm thyself.

[*She bustles about, evidently anxious to please the newcomer*]

MISTRESS CHAMPNEY. Ay! 'Tis a cold bleak night. But when a body has to bake and brew, wash and mend, and keep the house straight, evening's the only time for gadding. But I come here on business, neighbour.

MISTRESS MERROW. Business or no, you're kindly welcome, Mistress Champney.

MISTRESS CHAMPNEY. [*Peremptorily*] Then once for all, good Mistress Merrow, will your daughter marry my son Hodge, or will she not?

MISTRESS MERROW. Ah! have a little patience! Would that I could make her! The girl's clean daft. Her head is full of whims and fancies. Why did I put green ribbons on her sleeves when she was christened! She is bewitched!—bewitched!

MISTRESS CHAMPNEY. Bewitched or no, she'll have to give my Hodge an answer in a week, else he shall marry Jeanneton, the woodman's daughter. She is a comely wench; she'd make him a good wife, and I would see Hodge settled.

MISTRESS MERROW. [*Wringing her hands*] What am I to do? What can I say to the mad, doting maid? To think of that good mill! To think of

all those chests stuffed full of silver things ! To think she might be mistress in the house, — have good gold pieces in her pocket —

MISTRESS CHAMPNEY. [*Haughtily*] And wherefore does she scorn my Hodge, this girl without a penny to her name?

MISTRESS MERROW. Oh, she is crazy, — crazy, neighbour ! You'll mock at her, as I do. For whom think you she waits ? The Prince will come, she says ! The Prince will come !

MISTRESS CHAMPNEY. [*Bursting into derisive laughter*] The Prince ! the Prince ! Well, Hodge is spared a madwoman to wife. No, no, neighbour. That is too good a joke. I cannot swallow it !

MISTRESS MERROW. Listen ! I hear her foot-step on the stairs. Hide here with me, and you shall judge. [*She draws MISTRESS CHAMPNEY out of sight, behind the high settle*]

Enter ROSAMUND, humming a song. She is a slender, pretty girl dressed in a peasant's costume of dark woollen stuff. Her bodice is of velvet, above which is a square-cut chemisette of white. Her hair, tied with gay ribbons, falls in two plaits down her back. On her head is a little

Dutch cap. In the bosom of her dress is a beautiful red rose. She sits down at the spinning-wheel, and sings while she turns it.

Ah, Magic Rose,
When will you rest
Deep in the heart
Of him I love best?

Rare Magic Rose,
Swiftly unfold;
Show him your heart
Is purest of gold.

Dear Magic Rose,
When will he see
All he is seeking
Simply means — thee?

Ah, Magic Rose,
Grow tall in his heart;
Ope your red leaves;
Bid folly depart.

Bring me my Prince
Ere this day close,
That we may share thee,
O Magic Rose!

[She rises, lights a candle, and half drawing the curtains, places it on a table near the window]

[As the two women come forward before she turns from the window]

MISTRESS CHAMPNEY. *[Mockingly]* Give you good evening, my fine lady Rosamund! A pretty song, no doubt, if one had wit to fathom it. When you marry Hodge, my lass, you 'd better sing of pigs and poultry. 'T is all *he'll* understand, I warrant you!

[ROSAMUND starts when the woman addresses her, and stands silently leaning against the table]

MISTRESS MERROW. *[Angrily]* Tell Mistress Champney why you light the candle, girl! She's slow to credit all your folly.

ROSAMUND. *[Deliberately]* The sky is dark. I put it there to guide the Prince, if he should come to-night.

MISTRESS MERROW. *[Turning to her neighbour]* What did I tell you! *Now* do you believe?

MISTRESS CHAMPNEY. *[Sarcastically]* You've seen the Prince, no doubt.

ROSAMUND. *[Simply]* Yes, and once spoken with him near the palace, when he went a-hunting.

MISTRESS CHAMPNEY. And he will come again to woo a simple peasant girl, of course. It is the way of princes !

ROSAMUND. [*Very simply*] Yes ; he will come. Sooner or later he will come.

MISTRESS MERROW. And if your mother may make bold to ask, how do you know ?

ROSAMUND. Because he seeks the Magic Rose. I have it. It is mine. Sooner or later he will seek it here.

MISTRESS CHAMPNEY. [*Turning to MISTRESS MERROW*] 'Tis true the Prince, who seems as crazy as this girl of yours, has left the palace now a whole long year, and goes for ever searching over hill and dale for something — Heaven knows what !

MISTRESS MERROW. The Magic Rose ! The Magic Rose indeed ! And you, girl, say you have it. Show it us !

[*ROSAMUND takes the rose from her breast and holds it out*]

ROSAMUND. Here ! though you cannot see it.

BOTH WOMEN. Her hands are empty !

ROSAMUND. [*Shaking her head sadly.*] Can I help it, if to you it is invisible ?

MISTRESS CHAMPNEY. [*Turning to MISTRESS MERROW*] Farewell, good neighbour. I am sorry for thee. *My* children are not mad, and Heaven be praised, say I! Victuals and drink in plenty; a fine silk gown o' Sundays; a good honest husband, — *that* contents my Margot, and I render thanks for 't.

MISTRESS MERROW. [*As the other woman draws the hood of her cloak over her head and prepares to go.*]

[*Aside to ROSAMUND*] Ungrateful girl! Have n't I slaved for you and for your future, morning, noon, and night — and now you ruin all!

[*To MISTRESS CHAMPNEY, in ingratiating voice*] One moment, neighbour! The night is dark. I'll take the lantern and go with you. On the road we'll have more talk about this matter. The girl will have more sense — [*She takes the lantern and follows her neighbour, turning at the door to throw an angry glance at her daughter before she goes out*]

[*ROSAMUND sighs, crosses room to the hearth, and sitting on the settle looks into the fire*

[*A knock. She starts, goes to the door, and opens it*

[*A young man in the dress of a poor huntsman stands on the threshold*]

ROSAMUND. [*Stepping back, exclaims below her breath*] The Prince!

PRINCE. [*Looking at her in astonishment*] The Prince? [*Glances at his dress*] How do you know me, pretty maiden?

ROSAMUND. [*Hesitating*] Will you come in? . . . [*He enters. ROSAMUND is still confused*] Oh, Sire, it is common talk amongst your people that you have left the palace, to seek —

PRINCE. [*Dreamily*] The Magic Rose — the Magic Rose.

ROSAMUND. You are faint and weary. Sit here, my Prince, and I will fetch you wine. [*She brings a flagon, and pours out wine*]

PRINCE. Thanks for your kindness, gentle mistress. [*He looks dreamily into the fire*]

ROSAMUND. [*Watching him*] This Magic Rose, my Prince? What is the Magic Rose?

PRINCE. Ah! if I only knew!

ROSAMUND. Why do you seek it?

PRINCE. [*Still looking into the fire*] Because 't is said it brings strange happiness. They say that with its owner, Beauty walks as a familiar friend.

They say this dull, cold earth grows sweet with flowers. They say bright visions come and blot away all the sad dreariness of daily life.

ROSAMUND. And so you seek this rose?

PRINCE. Yes, for without it everything seems vain.

ROSAMUND. [*In low voice*] Yet if you saw it, like as not you'd pass it by unnoticed.

PRINCE. [*Turning his head sharply*] Ah! your voice brings memories. Let me see your face! Come nearer, to the firelight.

[*ROSAMUND goes slowly to the settle, and sitting down by the PRINCE looks at him.*]

PRINCE. [*In amazement*] You are the girl I talked with long ago. Till then the Magic Rose was never in my thoughts. [*Eagerly*] Tell me! Tell me now — what is your name? You would not tell me when we wandered in the forest.

ROSAMUND. [*Slowly*] My name — is Rosamund.

[*PRINCE, gazing at her, takes her hands, and they rise together*]

PRINCE. [*Softly*] Is it indeed the Rose — the Magic Rose?

ROSAMUND. Did I not say you'd pass it by unnoticed?

PRINCE. [*Overjoyed and almost incredulous*]
 Yes! It brings the visions! Winter reigns outside this firelit room. A moment since 't was winter in my heart. A miracle has happened; it is Spring!

[*A twittering of birds is heard. Music fills the air. The door opens, and slim figures in filmy green crowned with blossom and carrying blossoming branches fill the room. They sing, while the PRINCE stands with his arm round ROSAMUND*

Winter is past;
 Enter the spring.
 Hark to the music
 Of linnets that sing!

Blossoming trees
 Against a blue sky,
 Soft rushing wind
 Through the treetops high.

In the heart of the Prince
 Spring finds a nest,
 Over his wanderings,
 Finished his quest.

[*The PRINCE draws ROSAMUND'S head on to his shoulder*

Joy shall be his
 Wherever he goes,
 For see, on his heart
 Blossoms the Rose.

*[The music dies softly away, and the figures
 step back into the dim, unlighted part
 of the room*

*Enter ROSAMUND's mother. She pauses on the thresh-
 old in surprise.*

MISTRESS MERROW. Who is this, daughter?

ROSAMUND. Mother! — the Prince! See how
 the Spring has come into our little room! [*She
 points to the shadowy figures*]

MISTRESS MERROW. [*Looking round angrily*]
 What do you mean, girl? There is nothing here
 but leaping shadows from the fire. The Prince? A
 pretty Prince, indeed! A peasant rather, you should
 say.

PRINCE. [*Smiling as he empties his wallet of gold
 pieces*] Here, good mother. Now you'll know the
 Prince!

MISTRESS MERROW. [*Staring, then curtseying
 low*] Oh, Sire! forgive me. [*Glancing at her*

dress] And I in this poor gown! Wait, wait! I'll come again. [*She hurries to door L.*]

ROSAMUND. [*Shaking her head sadly as she points to the spirits of the Spring*] She does not see.

PRINCE. [*Taking the rose from her breast and holding it between them*] No, she never sought the Magic Rose.

[*The Spring spirits gather round them, singing very softly*]

Even the saddest hours
Draw to their close ;
Hidden amongst them,
Perchance, is the Rose.

Curtain

IN ARCADY



IN ARCADY

No scenery of any kind is necessary. *In Arcady* can be played at one end of a big drawing-room, with just a curtain, and if possible, a row of footlights to separate the "stage" from the audience.

MUSIC. The thin, faint music of a harpsichord would greatly help the dream-like effect of the dancing figures, and it is essential that the singer of *Colin and his lady-love* should possess a clear voice, so that the words may be distinctly audible.

The Watteau shepherds and shepherdesses should of course be represented by children.



IN ARCADY

SCENE. — *A drawing-room. Curtains divide it into two parts, back and front. In the back drawing-room stands a cabinet, containing china figures, miniatures, etc. Doors R. and L. When the curtain rises the stage is dark. Door R. opens cautiously, and DICK, a boy of nine, appears, a lighted candle in his hand. He is in his shirt-sleeves, his hair is rough; he carries his shoes in his hand. He peers into the room. In a moment door L. opens with equal caution, and SYLVIA enters. She is a little younger than DICK. She is in her dressing-gown. She, too, carries her shoes in one hand, and a lighted candle in the other.*

DICK. [*In a whisper*] Sylvia! Is that you?

SYLVIA. [*In answering whisper*] Yes. I'm so frightened. Turn on the light.

[*DICK obeys. The children blow out their candles*

SYLVIA. What time is it?

DICK. [*Glancing at clock*] Ten minutes to twelve. I say, the back stairs creaked like anything. Did yours?

SYLVIA. Yes, and there was an awful noise. I thought it was lions at first, but it was papa snoring.

DICK. When I passed Fräulein's door, she was snoring too, but hers was like cats. I say! of course your silly dream won't come true.

SYLVIA. But lots of them *have* come true, have n't they? Do you remember the apple dream? And the dream about the bird's nest, and —

DICK. Yes, I know, that's the funny part. That's why I've kept awake all this horrid long time. Now tell me once more, right from the beginning, and then we shall know exactly what to do. Don't think I believe it, though; I'm not such a muff!

[*The children sit on the sofa together*]

SYLVIA. I've told you lots of times already, but I'll say it again if you like. I dreamt last night that the shepherdess lady in the cabinet — the one in the pink dress, you know [*pointing in the direction of the cabinet*] — came and stood beside my bed, and she was crying and sobbing. So I said, "What are you

crying for?" and *she* said, "Because I'm always on the top shelf, and Colin's always on the bottom shelf, and we can never see one another." Oh, Dick! she was crying *dreadfully*—

DICK. Yes, go on. Never mind about the howling. What did *you* say?

SYLVIA. I said, "But the key of the cabinet has been lost for years and years. What can I do?" And she said, "Wait till to-morrow night. Then press the knob underneath the writing-table, and you'll find a secret drawer, and —"

DICK. Well, we can try that. Come along!

[*They run to writing-table. Dick kneels down and feels underneath*

There *is* a knob!

SYLVIA. Press it *hard!*

[*Drawer flies open*

DICK. Is it there?

SYLVIA. [*Excitedly*] Yes! Yes! A dear little key with a green ribbon.

DICK. Let's look! So it is.

[*They go back to sofa*

DICK. Well, *that* came true, anyway. Wasn't it exciting? Go on. What next?

SYLVIA. Well, then she said, "To-morrow is Mid-

summer's Eve. Wait till twelve o'clock, and then unlock the cabinet and put me beside Colin."

DICK. It *is* Midsummer's Eve ; I looked it out in Fräulein's calendar. But what's that got to do with it?

SYLVIA. Fräulein says it's a great fairy night.

DICK. Fräulein's an awful rotter. [*Doubtfully*]
Still —

SYLVIA. I must make haste and tell you the rest, or else it will be twelve o'clock. Well! she said, "Put me beside Colin, and then go into the front drawing-room, and draw the curtains,— and you'll see!"

DICK. I don't believe there'll be anything to see.

SYLVIA. Then why did you come down?

DICK. [*Confused*] Oh! just for fun. [*Eagerly*]
I say, it's five minutes to!

[*They cross the room to cabinet, and look through the glass*]

SYLVIA. I wonder if all the other shepherds and shepherdesses are her friends? If so, they'll be awfully pleased when she meets Colin again. Won't they? [*In a whisper*] She really begins to look a little bit alive, don't you think so, Dick?

DICK. Rot! . . . I say, Sylvia, I've always wanted to look at those miniatures, have n't you? It

will be awfully exciting! They're stuck away so far at the back, you can't see them properly.

SYLVIA. The little girl's my great-great-grandmother, isn't she?

DICK. Yes. Did you ever see such a frock in your life!

SYLVIA. Well! Look at your little great-great-grandfather. Fancy a boy wearing lace ruffles! But they're rather pretty. I wonder how you'd look in lace ruffles, Dick?

DICK. [*Scornfully*] Don't be so silly.

SYLVIA. They married one another when they grew up, did n't they?

DICK. Yes. Granny told me they were brought up together in the same house, just like you and me.

SYLVIA. And *he* was called Dick, and she was called Sylvia. . . . I say, Dick, they're on separate shelves, too. Perhaps they would like to be together. Shall we move them?

DICK. Yes, if you like.

SYLVIA. I suppose *we* shall marry one another, when we get grown up, sha'n't we, Dick?

DICK. It depends how you behave yourself. If you're not a little silly, and always do what I tell you — perhaps —

SYLVIA. Hush! It's going to strike!

[The clock strikes twelve. DICK puts the key in the cupboard and opens it]

DICK. *[In a loud whisper]* You move the shepherd and shepherdess, and I'll put your great-great-grandmother beside my great-great-grandfather — So!

SYLVIA. *[Pulling DICK's sleeve]* Now we must come and draw the curtains!

[The children come forward and pull curtains across, concealing the cabinet]

[Faint music begins, the curtains part, are pulled back, and a procession of little Watteau shepherds and shepherdesses enter, two and two, stepping in time to the music. Behind them follow a boy and girl about the same age as DICK and SYLVIA, dressed in the fashion of their great-grandparents.]

The children sit on the sofa with clasped hands, staring.

DICK. *[In a whisper, as the last two figures enter]* Sylvia, do you see who they are?

SYLVIA. Yes. My great-great-grandmother when she was a little girl! Oh, Dick!

DICK. And my great-great-grandfather !

[The boy and girl stand together opposite the sofa on which DICK and SYLVIA are seated, the boy with his arm round the girl. The shepherds and shepherdesses stand in groups, as though talking and laughing. The pink shepherdess is in front. "Colin" kneels and kisses her hand.]

SYLVIA. There 's the pink shepherdess lady !

DICK. And that 's Colin ! Don't you remember his crook, and the flowers on his waistcoat ?

SYLVIA. The others are all their friends, I suppose. I told you they'd be glad !

DICK. Hush !

[A voice which seems to come from the distance sings, while the pink shepherdess and "Colin" stand as though talking, Colin with his arm round the shepherdess]

Colin and his lady-love
Step across the years ;
They have bade farewell to grief,
Dried their china tears.

In the land of Arcady,
Where the skies are blue,
And the sheep are fleecy white,
They will live anew.

There upon the emerald grass
They will sit and sing,
While the snowy china lambs
Gaily round them spring.

Colin in his satin coat,
Phyllis with her crook,
Laugh and pipe and dance and play
By the babbling brook.

For the land of Arcady
Knows no grief, no fears ;
Colin and his lady-love
Step across the years.

[*The shepherds and shepherdesses dance*

THE GIRL. [*To her companion, when the dance is over*] Dick ! I vow you must believe me for the future. See ! They have come to life, just as my dream foretold.

THE BOY. I'll warrant it, Colin will marry the little shepherdess.

THE GIRL. When we are men and women, Dick, shall we be married ?